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WALTER LONG AND THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY, 1905-1921

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE
UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL
IN CANDIDATURE FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

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PAGE NUMBERING AS ORIGINAL

I hereby declare that this dissertation and the research on which it is based is wholly my own independent work.

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JULY 1984

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PREFACE

Although a senior Conservative politician for many years, Walter Long has not previously received the historical attention usual for a man of such eminence. An autobiography, entitled Memories, appeared in 1923. Based on personal reminiscence rather than any historical evidence, it is often inaccurate and is of little use as a source.

In 1936 a biography, by Sir Charles Petrie, appeared; it is entitled Walter Long and his Times. Its sentiments are laudatory, its tone deferential. The work is a model of how not to write good political biography: the narrative is general and uncritical, and whilst there are extensive passages of quotation from Long's correspondence no attempt is made to relate the material either to its historical context or to the evidence left by Long's colleagues and contemporaries.

In 1970 an American scholar, Roderick Clifford, tried to improve on Sir Charles Petrie's work with a Johns Hopkins Ph.D. thesis entitled 'Long of Wraxall: The Political Career of Walter Long, 1854-1924'. Although making grandiose claims to offer new insights into Long's career and based on primary sources, Dr Clifford's study really adds very little to the picture presented by Petrie, except to fill in the essential facts of Long's biography. Dr Clifford accepts at face value the critical judgements - necessarily suspect - of Long's political rivals and concludes that 'he emerges as a reactionary figure, often demonstrably out of touch with the realities of the political situation.' The trouble is, Dr Clifford demonstrates that Long was out of touch not by objective consideration of the evidence, but by unfounded assertion. Once again, the narrative is general, and the author displays little sympathy with his subject. Many important areas of Long's career are either

neglected by cursory treatment or omitted altogether (See Appendix A).

Although able to consult the papers of many of Long's contemporaries, Clifford did not have access to the full collection of Long's own papers, remarking that 'the private manuscripts of the Long family were of limited help because of their incomplete state.' The forty-one volumes now in the British Library were not available to Dr Clifford, nor was a substantial section of the papers now available at the Wiltshire County Record Office. Needless to say, the present study is in no way derived from Dr Clifford's work.

The present study attempts to consider, in the light of recent historical scholarship and of a wide range of primary sources, Long's political career between the years 1905 and 1921. For seven of those years he was a cabinet minister, for the remaining nine he was a leading opposition figure. Long's private papers (See Appendix B) form the main basis for this study. Although split into two collections, one at the Wiltshire County Record Office and one at the British Library, they would appear to be more or less complete for the years under consideration, and, when used in conjunction with official and published sources, and with the private papers of Long's contemporaries, they enable a comprehensive account of Long's most important years in British politics to be constructed.

The picture which emerges is one of a senior politician who has been consistently underrated by historians and poorly served by a single biography. The present study makes no attempt at biography. Rather, it invites a new look at the later career of a now largley forgotten statesman and suggests that the traditional appraisal of Walter Long as a dull-witted Tory squire can no longer be upheld.

My thanks are due to the archivists and staff of the following institutions in which I have worked: Birmingham University Library; Bodleian Library, Oxford; British Library; Churchill College Archive Centre, Cambridge; Conservative Research Department; Durham County Record Office; House of Lords Record Office; India Office Library; Liverpool City Library; Sheffield University Library.

I am also most grateful to the following: Sir George Bull and Mr Anthony Bull for permission to consult the hitherto unused collection of their father's papers now in the care of Churchill College, Cambridge; the Earl of Shelburne for granting me access to the papers of the 5th Marquess of Lansdowne at Bowood House; Dr Colin Matthew of Christ Church, Oxford, for allowing me to consult the volume of cartoons of Walter Long, of which he is the owner; the Rt. Hon. Viscount Long of Wraxall for assisting my enquiries regarding the papers of his grandfather. I am also indebted to the Librarian and staff of Bristol University Library and to the many historians who have assisted me by kindly responding to my queries regarding various aspects of this research. My special thanks are due to the County Archivist and staff of the Wiltshire Record Office for their unfailing assistance, courtesy and patience over a period of many months as I worked my way through the Long papers.

My greatest intellectual debt must be to my research supervisor, Professor John Vincent, who first suggested to me that the political career of Walter Long might prove worthy of investigation. His knowledge of modern historical sources and perceptive criticism of early drafts of this work proved invaluable, whilst his sheer originality of mind has served as an inspiration throughout.

R.P.M.

NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

The terms Conservative and Unionist have been used interchangeably throughout, as was the practice during the period under discussion.

ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations have been used throughout the footnotes:

A.C.P.	Austen Chamberlain Papers, Birmingham University Library.
A.P.	Asquith Papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford.
B.P.	Balfour Papers, British Library.
B.L.P.	Bonar Law Papers, House of Lords Record Office.
Bu.P.	Sir William Bull Papers, Churchill College, Cambridge.
C.P.	Curzon Papers, India Office Library.
E.S.P.	Earl of Selborne Papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford.
L.P.	Walter Long Papers, British Library.
L.G.P.	Lloyd George Papers, House of Lords Record Office.
L.L.P.	Lady Londonderry Papers, Durham County Record Office.
M.P.	Milner Papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford.
P.R.O.	Public Record Office.
S.P.	Sandars Papers, Bodleian Library, Oxford.
W.B.P.	Lord Willoughby de Broke Papers, House of Lords Record Office.
W.L.P.	Walter Long Papers, Wiltshire County Record Office.

INTRODUCTION

Walter Hume Long was born at Bath on 13 July 1854. He always claimed descent from the original Longs of Wiltshire, although there is some doubt owing to a 'missing link' in the family's genealogy.[1] The Longs of Wraxall have been associated with Wiltshire for centuries and numerous members of the family, invariably bearing the Christian names Walter, Richard or Robert, have represented constituencies in Wiltshire, Somerset and Gloucestershire. Both of Walter Long's grandfathers sat in parliament.[2] They were not the most garrulous of MPs: his paternal grandfather never uttered a word, his maternal grandfather managed only one three minute speech. The eldest son of Richard Penruddocke Long, he had four brothers, of whom the eldest was created Baron Gisborough in 1917, and five sisters.[3]

His mother, Charlotte Anna, was Irish, a daughter of William Wentworth Fitzwilliam Dick, MP., of Humewood, County Wicklow. This gave Long his second Christian name and was the sole basis of his claim to

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[1]Dispute arose over a 'missing link' which made it impossible to prove the descent of the Rood Ashton Longs from the Wraxall Longs. Burke, whom Long derided as the 'great autocrat' in these matters, never accepted such descent. See W.L.P., WRO 947/448 ESTATE.

[2]Long's paternal grandfather sat for North Wiltshire, 1835-65; his maternal grandfather sat for County Wicklow, 1852-80.

[3]It was Long who, as the newly appointed Colonial Secretary in Lloyd George's government, recommended that his brother be raised to the peerage. See recommendations for New Year's Honours, 1917, A.P., MS. Asquith, 32/166-71

be an Irishman. He was Irish in no other sense, although in later life he often made political capital out of his Irish connections, claiming to understand Ireland as only an Irishman could. In fact, he lived in Wales until the age of twelve and in England for the remainder of his life. He was born into a political family and it is not surprising that as the eldest son he should have become a career politician. All that is surprising is that he achieved such high office and at one time looked set to become the leader of the Conservative party and a possible future prime minister.

But his life begun in fairly humble surroundings. His father had inherited a property at Dolforgan, Montgomeryshire, and here Long enjoyed a simple country childhood. It was as a small child in Wales that Long first learnt to ride horses, a passion which remained with him throughout life, and he was allowed to mix freely with his father's tenants, so that he became accustomed at an early age to the ways of the country-side. So, too, his introduction to politics began at an early age, for when he was only five in 1859 his father contested and won Chippenham as a Conservative. He was educated privately by the Rev. Tiddeman from the adjoining village, riding on his pony the mile and a half to the vicarage where he would receive his lessons, then riding home again. Richard Penruddocke Long succeeded his father (Long's grandfather) as Member for Wiltshire

North in 1865, although poor health obliged him to give up the seat soon after, and two years later he inherited the family's estates in Wiltshire. The years in Wales had been happy ones for Long but it was a stipulation of his grandfather's will that the property at Dolforgan be sold. And so, in 1867, Long's connections with Montgomeryshire were abruptly terminated.[1]

On moving to Rood Ashton, the family estate just outside Trowbridge, Long was sent to a private tutor, a Cambridge friend of his father's who lived nearby. He later described this man as 'a High Churchman ... of violent and at times uncontrollable temper.' He then went to spend two years at a small private school on Salisbury Plain before entering Harrow in the fourth form. At about this time both his parents began to suffer from ill health, and regular winter trips abroad became a feature of family life. The youngest of the five boys had died shortly before the family left Wales and his father never fully recovered from the blow. Richard Penruddocke Long retired from active politics, vacated his newly won North Wiltshire seat, and died in the South of France in 1875 at the age of only forty-nine.

At Harrow Long took a lively interest in sport and played for the school cricket and football Elevens. In his last year, 1873, he distinguished himself in the

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[1]Long's own account of his childhood can be found in The Rt. Hon. Viscount Long of Wraxall, Memories (London, 1923); this work is hereafter cited as Memories.

school match against Eton at Lords, with Harrow gaining a victory for the first time in six years. Coincidentally, the Eton team included his future colleague, Alfred Lyttelton. Long always looked back on his Harrow days with fondness and remained for the rest of his life a firm believer in the virtues of a public school education. He maintained a lifelong interest in the school's affairs, later becoming a governor and in 1924 chairman of governors.[1] It is significant, however, that whilst he devoted a whole chapter of his autobiography to his Harrow days he made no mention of his academic studies. To read Long's account one would imagine that the timetable of the public schoolboy consisted entirely of sport. His masters were not altogether happy with his academic efforts, as a letter amongst the family's estate papers indicates:

> The enclosed report represents all I have to say against your boy ... he probably has so many friends in his room or is so much in theirs, that work is put rather hastily into a corner. I have in consequence been obliged to make him come and do his work ... again, not thinking him strong enough to stand altogether alone. He is not deficient in ability, and ought certainly to be higher ... and, I do not say that he is positively <u>very</u> idle.[2]

So, too, Long's own account of his undergraduate days

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[1]Long's papers relating to Harrow School can be found in W.L.P., WRO 947/888-9.

[2]H.E. Hutton of Harrow School to Richard Penruddocke Long, dated merely 11 July but probably 1871, W.L.P., WRO 947/965 ESTATE.

is dominated by his recollections of university sport. On his own admission he spent far too much time fox-hunting[1] and he left Christ Church, Oxford, without obtaining a degree - a fact which he neglected to mention in his autobiography.

To be fair, Long's undergraduate days were not without difficulty, although it is undoubtedly true that if he had devoted less time to sport and more to study his academic record need not have suffered such failure. He lost both of his first two terms owing to an attack of typhus - contracted from the drains of Canterbury Quad - and his father died whilst he was still at Oxford, so that family troubles no doubt contributed to his poor academic showing. His failure to obtain a degree always reinforced the attacks of his critics on his intellectual mediocrity. Many of his political contemporaries regarded Long as much more stupid than he really was. He appeared to be a man who had enjoyed the best possible education, yet who had squandered his time and learnt practically nothing. He was also something of a self-righteous killjoy at Oxford,[2] a fact which cannot have endeared him to his fellow undergraduates, as he condemned drinking and gambling. He first began to take an active interest in Conservative politics as an undergraduate, and was even invited to

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[1] Memories, pp. 42-3.
[2] Ibid., pp. 38-9.

stand as a candidate for the City of Oxford,[1] an invitation which he refused. He left Christ Church in 1877: four years at Harrow and a further four at Oxford had provided him with only a smattering of academic knowledge but with an obsession for sport. Certainly, he did not possess a first-rate intellect and he was not well read, but nor was he an absolute mediocrity. The fact that his mind was not cluttered with preconceived ideas and erudite theories was to be a source of political strength in later years, allowing him to respond to changing circumstances with remarkable alacrity and an intuitive grasp of what was possible.

As the eldest son, Long inherited the Rood Ashton estate on the death of his father in 1875.[2] He was not yet twenty-one years old; he was to be the master at Rood Ashton for forty-nine years. His father's early demise placed him in the position of guardian to his mother, whose health continued to be poor although she lived on for many years, and to his younger brothers and sisters. Today, the main road between Westbury and Melksham passes directly in front of Rood Ashton and the house lies in ruins. But an impression of the estate as it was in Long's lifetime can be gleaned

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[1] Ibid., pp. 43-4.

[2] The Longs held over 14,000 acres in Wiltshire and Somerset in the 1870s, worth over £23,000 per annum. See J. Bateman, The Great Landowners of Great Britain and Ireland (Leicester, 1971, Repr. of 1883 edition), p. 277; W.L. Guttsman The British Political Elite (London, 1963), p. 160.

from a description published in 1886:

> You have barely left the tall chimneys and quaint brick houses of Trowbridge behind you, when you enter by an avenue of Scotch firs an expanse of tree-studded meadows which form the favourite grazing ground of the Rood Ashton shorthorns. From the Castle Lodge the road through the home-park rises abruptly till you come suddenly on a carefully kept garden, and a house ... of Tudoresque turrets, pinnacles and battlements.... On one side is an Italian fountain, standing amidst ... trim flowerbeds ...; at the foot of the grassy slope, with its giant elms and beeches, lies a dark willow-fringed lake, tenanted by swans and wild ducks; on the other side rises steep Stourton Hill, with its covers and its famous fox-earth; while in the valley beyond, the distant woods, copses and hedgerows of Gastard seem to fade away into gray mist. ... Passing the billiard room with its Japanese cabinets ... leads you into a central lobby, which takes in the whole height of the house. The Gothic tracery, the vaulted roof, and the elaborate stucco mouldings, all savour of the present, ... and a green baize door ... opens on the ... roomy and cheerful study.[1]

Here, then, was the centre of Long's world, his home and his retreat throughout a political career spanning four decades.

But it was not to Rood Ashton that Long returned when he left Oxford in 1877. Instead, he took rooms at the "King's Arms", Bicester, and for the next two years he devoted his life almost entirely to fox-hunting. It is

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[1]This description was published in the series 'Celebrities at Home', The World, 22 Dec. 1886.

no exaggeration to say that hunting had become an obsession for Long, and, until poor health prevented it in later life, he remained its devotee. In this early period he would travel to the remotest parts of England, Scotland, Wales or Ireland to hunt. Even when he first entered parliament the demands of the chase were delicately balanced against those of politics, and in his last years, when he was unable to ride a horse, he followed the hounds in a small Ford motorcar. For many years he was chairman of the Avon Vale hunt, resigning in 1920 to become joint master with Sir Alfred Read. He regarded fox-hunting as 'the greatest of our national sports',[1] and his private letters are littered with hunting stories.

A measure of his passion can be found in the fact that he devoted over seventeen pages of his autobiography to hunting reminiscences and anecdotes[2] - more space than he gave to the electoral defeat of 1906, the People's budget, the struggle over the Parliament Bill, and Balfour's retirement and the leadership contest of 1911, all put together. Opposition to fox-hunting he dismissed with the utterly fatuous remark that those who argue that hunting 'is a cruel sport and ought not to be allowed can never have seen a fox in the course of a hunt or they would realise he enjoys himself thoroughly'.[3] It is odd remarks of this kind which have done so much to secure

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[1] Memories, p. 333.
[2] Ibid., pp. 333-51
[3] Ibid., p. 345.

Long's reputation, both amongst historians and contemporaries, as a thick-skinned, dull-witted Tory squire. Certainly, for the two years he lived at Bicester or other hunting centres, he behaved like one. But in 1878, with his obsessive hunting passion still at its height, he did manage to find time to marry Lady Dorothy Blanche, the fourth daughter of the ninth Earl of Cork and Orrery. They were to have five children, two sons and three daughters.

The other great sporting passion of Long's life was cricket. As a young man he played regularly at the Lansdown Cricket Club on the outskirts of Bath, a club which occasionally secured the services of W.G. Grace, whom Long got to know well. As he got older he played less, but his interest continued. He later became a member of the M.C.C. Committee at Lords and eventually president of the club in 1906, a privilege which he regarded as one of the greatest of his life.

In 1880 Long turned his attentions once more to politics and in April he entered parliament as the Conservative Member for Wiltshire North, a seat which both his father and grandfather had held before him, although it was by no means a safe seat for a Conservative, for it contained the railway town of Swindon whose workers could usually be counted upon to vote Liberal. In parliament he associated himself from the beginning with the 'Country Gentleman Party'; he supported Disraeli

and believed in social reform wedded to imperialism. He made his maiden speech, to an almost empty House, on 26 July 1880,[1] and soon established himself as an expert on agricultural affairs. In November 1885 he moved to another marginal Conservative seat, the Eastern or Devizes division of Wiltshire.

The following year he joined Lord Salisbury's government as parliamentary secretary to the Local Government Board, and it was here that he made his reputation as a hard worker and a capable administrator. As well as taking control of all Poor Law work, Long played a large part in framing the Local Government Act of 1888, and the skill which he displayed in carrying this and the London County Council Bill through parliament marked him out for promotion. Gladstone's return to office in August 1892 delayed his promotion, and personal defeat in Wiltshire forced him to take the West Derby division of Liverpool, a safe Conservative seat which he was to hold for seven years. When the Lords threw out home rule and Salisbury returned in 1895 to form his third and last administration, Long was given a seat in the cabinet as President of the Board of Agriculture. He was just forty years old.

If Walter Long is these days remembered at all it is invariably as the man who muzzled all dogs in his campaign to stamp out rabies in the late 1890s. Never

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[1]See 254 Parl.Deb. ser.3 cols. 1388-90. Long made his maiden speech on the Compensation for Disturbance (Ireland) Bill. He mistakenly claimed in Memories, p. 81, that he first spoke during the debate on the Irish Land Bill in 1881.

in the course of a long political career was he so unpopular as during these years. At one point the Canine Defence League, that most worthy of Victorian philanthropic societies, handed a petition of some 80,000 signatures to Lord Salisbury demanding that he be dismissed, and he received a torrent of threatening letters.[1] The sobriquet 'the Dog-Muzzler' stuck with him for the rest of his life.[2] In actual fact, Long's muzzling orders never applied to more than about twenty per cent of the area of Britain at any one time. Whilst they made him notorious and unpopular, a household bogeyman, they also succeeded in totally eradicating rabies from the country - something for which Long deserves the gratitude of succeeding generations. Before

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[1] Memories, pp. 122-3. Unfortunately, these letters do not appear to have survived.

[2] The anti-rabies campaign was not easily forgotten, and for the remainder of Long's political career cartoonists and satirists made great play with the subject. A good example of this is to be found in the political humour of late 1906 dealing with Long's reopening of the controversy surrounding the appointment of Sir Anthony MacDonnell as Permanent Under-Secretary at the Irish Office. Punch of 12 Sept. 1906 carried a full page cartoon of Long holding a muzzle, attached to which a label read, 'Muzzle? Muzzle? Seems a familiar notion!' And a supplement given away with the Weekly Freeman, National Press and Irish Agriculturist of 22 Sept. 1906 developed the theme further with a cartoon printed in three colours, Long being represented as an orange dog. Wyndham says to Balfour, 'Quick! Get the muzzle on.' To which Balfour replies, 'I am afraid of the owner. You know Orange Billy has him now.' Even when Long visited the United States in 1912 he was greeted by the New York press as 'The Muzzler' and 'The Foe of the Mad Dog'.

1897, when muzzling was introduced, there had been an average of ten deaths per annum from rabies; in 1899, for the first time, there were none, and the disease was officially declared extinct. Why were Long's attempts to eradicate the rabid dog met with such hostility? It would be simplistic to suggest that the answer lies in the Englishman's traditional love of dogs, although this no doubt played its part. A more realistic explanation centres on the very originality of his policy. The British public had not by 1895, when the anti-rabies campaign begun, - the muzzling orders were in force for only two years beginning in 1897 - become accustomed to regulations and government controls on the sort of scale that Long proposed. Nor was it believed that such a disease could be extirpated by the stringent enforcement of a few sensible rules; the whole suggestion that rabies could be stamped out by prevention and isolation, rather than by treatment, was a novel idea. Long also had to battle against a cabinet which was at best indifferent, at worst downright hostile. Joseph Chamberlain poured scorn on the idea, Salisbury was apathetic, thinking the attempt more trouble than it was worth. But Long stuck to his policy. By the turn of the century there was no rabies in Britain.[1]

After the so-called 'khaki election' of 1900, at

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[1]Long's papers on his campaign against rabies do not appear to have survived, although his later comments in 1919 on the subject can be found in W.L.P., WRO 947/586.

which he had fought and won Bristol South for the Conservatives, Long returned to the Local Government Board, this time as its President. It was during this period of his career that Long first showed his willingness to depart from standard Tory doctrines when circumstances demanded a new approach. In an attempt to tackle the problem of rising unemployment he suggested in 1904 that the government should make cash advances at special low interest rates to selected areas where unemployment was particularly high. Balfour was horrified at the proposal and quickly warned Long of the 'dangerous extensions which this new principle may have in hands less firm.'[1] On Boxing Day Long replied with a strong argument in favour of an unorthodox approach.[2] And in 1905 he was responsible for the Unemployed Workmen Act, intended to relieve unemployment in urban areas; he also gave his firm support to the appointment of a Poor Law commission, little realising that Balfour would seize on the commission as a means to avoid any further action. Long was far ahead of his cabinet colleagues on the issue, but entrenched opposition forced the abandonment of his scheme - a scheme which, amongst other things, included provision for the paying of wages from local rates to the unemployed. He was attacked by his own party for desertion of Tory principles; he was vilified by wealthy London boroughs, anxious that their

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[1]Balfour to Long, copy, 23 Dec. 1904, B.P., Add. MS 49776.
[2]Long to Balfour, 26 Dec. 1904, ibid.

rates should not be used to subsidise the unemployed of poorer boroughs; and Conservative interests outside parliament castigated the proposals as a dangerous concession to socialism.[1] Long wanted to commit the State both to the maintenance of the unemployed and to the provision of temporary work, and the fact that he could advocate such policies shows that he could be progressive and far-sighted. As he commented from his retirement, 'I am bound to confess that my policy did not find favour in any quarter. Among my own friends it was regarded as being too much akin to socialism.... The prosecution of the plan was ultimately abandoned.'[2]

Long also became increasingly interested in this period in military affairs. He was always well informed on the state of the Army and Navy, and his papers abound with correspondence from serving officers. He naturally took a keen interest in the Wiltshire yeomanry, which he commanded between 1898 and 1906, and it is perhaps surprising that he turned down the Admiralty when first offered it in 1905.[3]

Yet, for all his love of sport and things military,

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[1]Long's attitude to the problem of the Poor Law and unemployment in 1904-5 has been considered in the following, to which I am indebted: John Brown, 'The Appointment of the 1905 Poor Law Commission', Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research 42 (1969); K.D. Brown, 'The Appointment of the 1905 Poor Law Commission - a Rejoinder', ibid., 44 (1971); John Brown, 'The Poor Law Commission and the 1905 Unemployed Workmen Act', ibid., 44 (1971).

[2]Memories, p. 139.

[3]Balfour's private secretary, J.S. Sandars, maintained that Long had wanted the Admiralty but had been 'thwarted by the vehement opposition of the First Sea Lord, Sir John Fisher....' J.S. Sandars [A Privy Councillor], Studies of Yesterday (London, 1928), p. 59.

Long was not a healthy man. He was short of stature, but with an athletic figure which he maintained even into old age, and he suffered from premature baldness. Throughout his adult life he wore a full moustache, and as a young man his thinning hair - even as an undergraduate Long's premature baldness was readily apparent - gave an impression of greater maturity. His career was plagued by bouts of illness. As he got older he suffered from neuralgia and in his last years he was the victim of arthritis of the spine. Despite the fact that his health was never good - even as a boy he had had frequent spells of illness - he was often described as the fittest man in the House. His ruddy countenance belied a frail constitution, and he deliberately fostered the image of a healthy, rugged squire. Contemporary reports, except in his last years, rarely made reference to his illnesses, except to report the bare facts of his longer absences. On the contrary, he was portrayed as the epitome of health and vigour. Only his closest family and friends knew the utter falsehood of the newspaper reports, of which the following, written shortly before his fiftieth birthday, is typical:

> It is not merely that peace of mind, based apparently on sound digestion, shines perpetually in Mr. Long's regular, finely cut features, but his complexion suggests countless cold baths and unlimited exercise in the fresh air.... He ... has an excellent voice, perfect elocution, a clear head, and a tenacious memory.[1]

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[1] The Wiltshire Chronicle, 7 May 1904.

Like so many politicians, Long's health was declining by the time he achieved senior rank; his years in high office were precisely those when his health was at its worst. T.P. O'Connor was closer to the truth when he observed in an obituary that,

> Behind the healthy ruddiness of the complexion and the taut, alert and apparently robust figure, certain weaknesses revealed themselves. He had months of suffering and for the last years of his life something like constant discomfort....[1]

So, too, there was something bogus about Long's emphasis of his connections with rural Wiltshire. Although he liked to be regarded as the champion of local interests, he was never particularly concerned to represent a local constituency. In fact, he represented a Wiltshire constituency for only twelve of the forty-one years he sat in the Commons; from 1893 until 1921 he sat for urban constituencies - Bristol, Dublin, Liverpool and Westminster.[2] And in 1900 he angled for the nomination at St. George's, Hanover Square, before accepting Bristol South, which

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[1] The Daily Telegraph (late edition), 27 Sept. 1924.

[2] Long represented the following constituencies: Wiltshire North, 1880-85; Wiltshire East (Devizes), 1885-92; West Derby division of Liverpool, 1893-1900; Bristol South, 1900-06; Dublin County South, 1906-10; The Strand, 1910-18; St. George's, Westminster, 1918-21.

was at least a West Country seat.[1] Family ties with Wiltshire provided a natural entry into politics for Long, but Wiltshire played little part in sustaining his career.

Commonly regarded as the representative of the agricultural wing of the party, Long nonetheless had numerous business interests, and much of his income came not from land but from investments. He held a number of directorships during his political career and was certainly no stranger to the kind of hard-headed, commercial Conservatism represented by men like Bonar Law and Beaverbrook.

The truth is, for all his play-acting as the spokesman of local interests and old-fashioned rural Conservatism, Long was never very interested in local politics and preferred to sit for an urban constituency. He found constituency work time consuming and tedious; he had no qualms about taking a totally safe seat with which he had no connections, and when in 1910 he managed to secure the nomination for the Strand he was more than grateful, vacating his Irish seat without a second thought. As far as he was concerned, the safer the seat the better;

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[1] See Sir Michael Hicks-Beach to Long, 19 Aug. 1900, L.P., Add. MS. 62408. Long only left Liverpool in 1900 because of a dispute with his local party organisation during the previous year. Archibald Salvidge had conducted a campaign in Liverpool to 'put down the growing lawlessness amongst Protestant clergy' and suppress various 'Romanist practices' in Church of England services. Long would have nothing to do with the campaign and refused to support the Church Discipline Bill which had received the backing of the Conservative Workingmen's Association, of which the up and coming Salvidge was chairman. The Bill was thrown out by an overwhelming majority in May 1899, but Long was forced to quit West Derby at the next election. See Stanley Salvidge, Salvidge of Liverpool (London, 1934), pp. 29-38.

Walter Long was essentially a career politician, and the image of the Conservative squire was part of his stock-in-trade.

CHAPTER ONE

A HARD CHIEF SECRETARY, 1905

On 12 March 1905 Long was appointed Chief Secretary for Ireland. Three days later he was sworn of the Irish Privy Council. The appointment was the 'dénouement' of the devolution crisis which had threatened the collapse of Balfour's government and the overthrow of traditional Unionist policy in Ireland.[1] It marked the effective end of the career of George Wyndham and the emergence of Long as a major force within the Conservative party. The devolution proposals to which the Under-Secretary, Sir Anthony MacDonnell, had lent his support stopped far short of home rule and were, indeed, considerably more moderate than the scheme - the Government of Ireland Bill - which Long was himself to pilot through the House of Commons just fifteen years later. For the moment, however, there could be no reform of Irish government. The Conservative party was in no mood to brook concessions; Irish Unionists were suspicious. The appointment of the new Chief Secretary symbolised a return to the stark dividing line between the Union on the one hand and home rule on the other.[2]

Long was well aware that his attacks on George Wyndham and

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[1] For a full account of the crisis see F.S.L. Lyons, 'The Unionist Party and the Devolution Crisis of 1904-05', Irish Historical Studies 6 (1948); Blanche Dugdale, 'The Wyndham-MacDonnell imbroglio, 1902-06', Quarterly Review, Jan. 1932.

[2] F.S.L. Lyons, Ireland Since the Famine (London, 1971), p. 218.

devolution would be interpreted by many as a crude manoeuvre to secure the Irish Office for himself, although Sir Edward Carson could have had the job for the asking, for Long was only offered the post after Carson had turned it down.[1] Nonetheless, he asked Balfour, when announcing the appointment, to stress his reluctance to leave the Local Government Board,[2] and he made it plain that he was willing to work with MacDonnell. He believed that he could afford to be magnanimous to MacDonnell, who had, after all, brought about the fall of Wyndham and Long's own promotion. This was something to be grateful for. It seemed unlikely that MacDonnell would cause further trouble, at least for the time being, but Long was soon to have cause to regret his magnanimity, for MacDonnell was to prove an incorrigible nuisance. The appointment of the new Chief Secretary was also tacit recognition by Balfour of the support which Long commanded on the back-benches. By abandoning Wyndham, his friend and colleague, Balfour had for the moment beaten off attacks on his own leadership.

One of Long's first priorities was to regain the confidence of Irish Unionists who had been led by the devolution crisis to suspect that the Conservative party was no longer their natural ally. It is a measure of his success as Chief Secretary that he was able to win the trust of Irish Unionists, both north and south, before

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[1] H. Montgomery Hyde, Carson (London, 1953), p. 209.
[2] See Long to Sandars, 12 Mar. 1905, B.P., Add. MS. 49776.

leaving office a mere ten months later. He retained this trust for many years, so that Ireland became a strong base for the support which he enjoyed within the Conservative party. To southern Irish Unionists in particular, he became the main bulwark in the fight against home rule. By masquerading as an Irish Unionist himself, he quickly won acceptance, making political capital out of his family's Irish connections from 1905 onwards. In his speeches he claimed to be half Irish and his middle name, derived from the family property at Humewood, County Wicklow, proved a great asset.[1] It is no doubt significant that he seems to have made no effort to trace his Irish ancestry before becoming Chief Secretary. But in 1905 he suddenly became very interested in his Irish genealogy. And when his enquiries proved successful he found himself obliged to be less than frank about some of his Irish connections. His great grandfather, for example, did not fit readily into the Unionist image which he sought to cultivate: William Hoare Hume, a member of the Irish House of Commons, had voted consistently against the Union in 1799-1800. Even more embarrassing, his father - Long's great-great grandfather - had been killed in mysterious circumstances during the Rising of 1798. But these blemishes were conveniently overlooked

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[1]The Humes were a branch of the Scotch house from which the Earls of Home, Dunbar and Marchmont sprang. A certain Thomas Hume accompanied the Duke of Ormonde to Ireland, where he acquired considerable wealth and property which was bequeathed to his descendants. The Humes had for generations been prominent members of the Irish parliament.

and Long proved very adept at blowing the Irish trumpet to the tune of his own rising political fortunes.[1]

By the beginning of the twentieth century Ireland was grossly over-represented, and any scheme of redistribution as a reflection of population would involve the loss of anything up to forty Irish seats. This meant that franchise reform was inevitably bound up with home rule.[2] That the Conservatives should have attempted to tackle redistribution in 1905 is hardly surprising - Long and others had been pushing for a Bill for years. Success could have kept the party in office through the winter and would certainly have reduced Irish Nationalist strength in the next parliament, thus making home rule less likely. From Long's point of view an independent Liberal government was much to be preferred to a Liberal government tied to Nationalist votes. On 11 July the government published its redistribution scheme, to be submitted to the House a week later. Presented by Gerald Balfour, now President of the Local Government Board, the scheme would have deprived Ireland of twenty-two seats had it not been defeated on a technicality.[3]

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[1]Papers relating to Long's interest in 1905 in his Irish genealogy can be found in L.P., Add. MS. 62409.

[2]For a discussion of the implications of redistribution for the Irish Nationalists and the Liberals see Neal Blewett, 'The Franchise in the United Kingdom, 1885-1918', Past and Present 32 (1965).

[3]The proposals were presented to the House in the form of resolutions, the government intending that they should be debated together as one measure. Irish Nationalist opposition was a foregone conclusion, but the Liberals, knowing that they could always fall back on Irish support whenever denied an overall majority, decided to oppose the measure as well. On 17 July the new Speaker, J.W. Lowther, announced that th

Although Long was prepared to work with Sir Anthony MacDonnell, he was not prepared to allow the Under-Secretary the same independence as Wyndham had been. MacDonnell would be kept on, but he must be put firmly in his place. The trouble was, MacDonnell would not give in easily, and acrimony between the two men marked virtually the whole of Long's tenure of the Irish Office. He did not want to lay himself open to the charge of conceding to the baying of the Irish Unionists by securing MacDonnell's removal from office - to be a strong Chief Secretary he needed to appear independent and impartial. To throw MacDonnell over would look like cowardice, so Long chose instead to face his critics and at the same time force MacDonnell to accept a subordinate position. But MacDonnell insisted that he had been appointed on the express condition that he be given 'adequate opportunities of influencing the policy and acts of the Irish Government.'[1] He was adamant that he had been granted special powers on his appointment, that they were essential to his job, and that to relinquish them was out of the question.[2] Long promptly abnegated

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Redistribution Resolution should be divided into a number of separate parts, on each of which there should be a discussion in Committee of the whole House. Opponents of the scheme were thus given an opportunity to attack the measure on various points of detail. Balfour promptly stated that the government would withdraw the Resolution and proceed with a Bill in the next session. The dissolution in December and its sequel, the Liberal landslide of January 1906, put an end to the Conservatives' plans. Ireland remained over-represented, and five years later, in 1910, the Liberals became the beneficiaries of this long-standing electoral anomaly.

[1] MacDonnell to Long, 16 Mar. 1905, W.L.P., WRO 947/68.

[2] Ibid.

MacDonnell's so-called special powers. In doing so he implicitly abnegated the policy of his predecessor in office. To force MacDonnell to accept a subordinate role was effectively to force the cabinet to turn its back on Wyndham's Irish policy. Long knew that his position was immensely strong - Balfour could hardly afford to lose another Chief Secretary - and that he could count on cabinet backing.

The Ulster Unionists had predictably taken a firm stand against MacDonnell, demanding his removal as a standing menace to Unionist interests. Long recognised that Wyndham had indeed allowed MacDonnell 'freedom of executive action within the limits of policy laid down' and condemned his predecessor for 'undue latitude'.[1] But he would not part with MacDonnell and risk misrepresentation in Ireland. Replying to a parliamentary question, Long made it clear on 11 April that MacDonnell would henceforth be treated as a subordinate. All Irish affairs, Long asserted, would now be under his own personal control and subject to his own personal approval. If this involved a change in the running of the Irish Office, then there would be a change.[2] This was an explicit public repud-iation of his predecessor's regime. MacDonnell stayed, but he was on a tight rein.

Long had a very poor opinion of Wyndham's administration

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[1] Cabinet memorandum by Long, 1 Apr. 1905, W.L.P., WRO 947/71.

[2] 144 Parl. Deb. ser.4 cols. 1278-9.

and later told Balfour that on taking office he had discovered that 'in the administration of the Land Act; in the action of the police; in the enforcement of the law and the adoption of measures generally for the protection of ... individuals, a policy had been in operation which was at direct variance with the cardinal principles of the Unionist Party.'[1] But whilst Long saw himself as the defender of those cardinal principles, MacDonnell did not. Within days of repudiating Wyndham's regime in the Commons Long took clear steps to check MacDonnell's capacity for independent action. On 19 April he issued an instruction requiring that all files be submitted for his consideration as a matter of course and he told MacDonnell to make no decisions whatsoever, even on small matters, without prior consultation.[2] MacDonnell had no choice but to submit, but he never really accepted Long's authority. He remained a rebel in the Unionist camp, quiescent but smouldering.

Trouble soon arose over the administration of the Land Act. Wyndham had been in the habit of treating some sales as special cases, but Long would have none of this. Shortly before resigning, Wyndham had asked the Estates Commissioners to treat the sale of Lord Rossmore's property as a priority. Long cancelled this direction. MacDonnell challenged him with the audacious remark that

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[1] Long to Balfour, copy, 20 Sept. 1905, W.L.P., WRO 947/61.

[2] See Long to MacDonnell, copy, 19 Apr. 1905, W.L.P., WRO 947/70.

it was not 'desirable ... to interfere with Mr Wyndham's orders',[1] but Long insisted that the Land Act was henceforth to be administered with total impartiality, telling the Under-Secretary that in future 'every case must be taken in order of priority.'[2]

There was further bad feeling between the two men over Long's refusal to countenance MacDonnell's proposal that a certain John Fitzgibbon be appointed as a paid negotiator to the Irish Land Commission. Apart from being a member of the United Irish League, Fitzgibbon had for years been a prominent local leader of agrarian agitation and had several convictions for crimes associated with intimidation. Yet MacDonnell insisted that Fitzgibbon was a suitable appointee. The strongly worded letter[3] with which Long dismissed the proposal as ridiculous cannot have helped to improve an already difficult working relationship.

By the autumn Long had decided that MacDonnell was intolerable and would have to go. He very much regretted that he had not got rid of the Under-Secretary in March, when it would have been easy to do so. He had made the mistake of believing that Wyndham's weakness had been responsible for MacDonnell's independence and he had

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[1] MacDonnell to Long, 6 June 1905, W.L.P., WRO 947/97.

[2] Long to MacDonnell, copy, 7 June 1905, ibid.

[3] See Long to MacDonnell, copy, 1 June 1905, W.L.P., WRO 947/99.

assumed that a strong Chief Secretary could easily control his subordinates. He had learnt otherwise. MacDonnell proved an outspoken nuisance whose views on Irish policy invariably conflicted with his own and who followed instructions with the greatest reluctance. He began to look for a post with which MacDonnell could be bought off, confiding to Balfour that:'The great majority of our friends ... would be glad if he could be got rid of.... It would be a splendid solution from the Irish point of view....'[1]

In November Long happened to ask for the monthly report of the Inspector-General of the Royal Irish Constabulary (R.I.C.) for November 1903. He discovered that the original report had been suppressed and that the original covering notes furnished by MacDonnell had disappeared. It looked as if MacDonnell had concealed the true facts about crime in Ireland and told the Inspector-General that the report was highly exaggerated and therefore unacceptable. The Inspector-General had then meekly rewritten the report. To Long, it looked as if MacDonnell, in order to have a better chance of securing approval for his incipient devolution plans, had deliberately misrepresented the level of crime in the country.[2] Not surprisingly, Long was furious; he was now more determined than ever to be rid of the Under-Secretary.

Later in the month a vacancy on the India Council seemed

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[1]Long to Balfour, 19 Oct. 1905, B.P., Add. MS. 49776.

[2]Papers relating to this incident are in W.L.P., WRO 947/104.

to provide the ideal opportunity. Long was now so annoyed with MacDonnell that he was ready to dismiss him out of hand, but Balfour would not hear of it: 'I do not quite see how you are to dismiss him as an official because people spread stories alleging his complicity with the enemy.'[1] MacDonnell therefore had to be persuaded to relinquish office, for to dismiss him was tantamount to admitting that the accusations of his enemies were true. And the enemies would then turn on the Chief Secretary who had allowed him to remain in office. Long employed every argument he could think of to persuade MacDonnell to resign, but it was all to no avail, and only the Liberal victory of January 1906 put an end to his dilemma. MacDonnell was not yet ready to quit Ireland: he was ready with another devolution scheme for the new Chief Secretary, James Bryce, within less than two months of Long leaving office.

The retention of MacDonnell's services in March 1905, then, was clearly a mistake. MacDonnell could have been dismissed at the same time as Wyndham resigned. This would have blackened Wyndham's reputation still further, but it would have satisfied Irish Unionists and boosted Long's popularity. In his desire to be fair and impartial Long encumbered himself with an Under-Secretary who was

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[1]Balfour to Long, 20 Nov. 1905, W.L.P., WRO 947/63.

to oppose almost every aspect of his policy.[1]

In his autobiography Long claimed that his working relationship with MacDonnell, 'the great civil servant', had been very good.[2] Nothing could be further from the truth. The working relationship between the two men was ill-tempered and argumentative. Long was determined to achieve the upper hand, MacDonnell was determined to maintain some degree of independence. The two men stood for opposing policies and opposing principles; and MacDonnell hampered Long's actions whenever he could. In a sincere attempt in March 1905 to be fair to MacDonnell, Long ensured that his Irish policy would be challenged at every turn. He should have condemned MacDonnell publicly, as he condemned Wyndham publicly.

Long also experienced difficulty in working with the Lord Lieutenant, Lord Dudley. Disagreements over policy came to a head at the end of July over the issue of a patronage appointment, and Long played on the knowledge that Balfour could not afford to lose another Chief Secretary to insist on getting his own way. The real problem was that Dudley disagreed with Long on policy,

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[1]Long told Austen Chamberlain in the autumn of 1906, when MacDonnell was again causing trouble over Irish policy, that to have sacked MacDonnell in March 1905 might have been expedient but would also have been unjust. He had found that the Under-Secretary had acted in accordance with Wyndham's instructions 'in everything he did'. Wyndham was therefore the villain, not MacDonnell. See Long to Chamberlain, 29 Sept. 1906, A.C.P., AC 7/4/9.

[2]Memories, pp. 146-7.

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arguing that prosecutions for intimidation were useless, as they merely drove the trouble underground, and that the grass-lands in Ireland ought to be divided to ease the demand for land purchase.[1] On 30 July Long used the threat of resignation to force Balfour to assert the precedence of the Chief Secretary. Long's telegram was blunt: 'Position ... is really becoming grotesque.... Would beg that distinct reply may be sent ... and decisive reply by Prime Minister will either produce resignation ... or give me authority.'[2]

In these circumstances, Balfour had no choice but to issue a statement of support for Long, and on 15 August he told Dudley that Long's view must prevail in all matters of policy. Long could not resist rubbing salt into the wounds by commenting to Balfour a few days later that the instructions to Dudley represented 'a model letter and ought to be preserved as a State Paper.'[3] This was no idle controversy over precedence: Long took a stand because he would brook no interference with his own administration. As he told Jack Sandars, Dudley 'has the most extraordinary notions, ... disagrees entirely with my policy, disapproves my appointments ... but as it is he goes on out of loyalty to his Chief.'[4] When, on 23 August, Balfour tried to restore calm between the two men,[5]

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[1] See Dudley to Long, 17 Aug. 1905, W.L.P., WRO 947/65.

[2] See Long to Balfour, 31 July 1905, B.P., Add. MS. 49776; Long's copy telegram is dated 15 Aug. 1905, W.L.P., WRO 947/65.

[3] Long to Balfour, 21 Aug. 1905, B.P., Add. MS. 49776.

[4] Long to Sandars, 21 Aug. 1905, ibid.

[5] Balfour to Long, 23 Aug. 1905, W.L.P., WRO 947/65.

Long merely remarked that Dudley was 'a very bad colleague in government.'[1] The plain fact was, Long found Dudley impossible to work with and would have liked Balfour to force his resignation.[2] In other words, Long's working relationship with both his Under-Secretary and the Lord Lieutenant was extremely poor. Both men were opposed to the traditional interpretation of Unionism to which Long adhered and both men made his task as Chief Secretary more difficult by questioning his every decision.

One of his decisions was to withdraw government subsidies granted for the teaching of the Irish language. This was an issue charged with emotion for Irish Nationalists. Long had to move with the greatest caution if he wished to avoid provoking agitation on the score of being niggardly and anti-Irish. He therefore proposed to placate nationalist outrage by undertaking not to abolish the subsidy outright but to transfer the money to other educational purposes, calculating that incipient agitation would collapse if the government made a significant improvement in the number of teachers in small schools. Long's difficulty lay in persuading the Treasury to substitute the appointment of more teachers for the teaching of the Irish language, instead of simply saving the money outright. The whole point of the exercise, as far as Long was concerned, was to undermine the rising tide of nationalism. The resurrection of the Irish

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[1] Long to Balfour, 25 Aug. 1905, B.P., Add. MS. 49776.
[2] See Long to Sandars, 25 Aug. 1905, ibid.

language gave credibility to the doctrine that the Irish were a separate people. This was a contention that Long refused to accept: the Irish language was an antiquated tongue which made no contribution to literature and maintained an illusion of separatism which it was the government's business to dispel. The Treasury was sympathetic and acquiesced in Long's demands towards the end of October.[1] Once again, however, Liberal victory and the fall of Balfour's government put an end to Long's policy before it had got off the ground.

His administration of the 1903 Land Act was more successful, although he was consistently hampered by a shortage of government funds. Long was firmly in favour of transferring as much land as possible to Irish tenants, believing that land purchase offered a sure means to undermine nationalist support. As long as there was no favouritism and no corruption, he believed that nationalism would wither and die once the Irish found themselves in possession of the land. The Treasury, though, was not prepared to promise unlimited amounts of cash or stock to be provided or issued for applications which might come in the future.[2] Long soon found himself with a Land Act whose provisions he wanted to make use of, but no money to do so. The total amount provided by the Treasury was soon many millions short of the

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[1] See Sir E.W. Hamilton, permanent Financial Secretary to the Treasury, to Long, 23 Oct. 1905, W.L.P., WRO 947/94.

[2] Memorandum regarding a conference at the Treasury on 27 July 1905 and forwarded to Long on 29 July 1905, W.L.P., WRO 947/101.

applications, giving Long's enemies the opportunity to say that he, and the government of which he was a member, no longer believed in land purchase.

By November the Irish Times was moved to comment that the Chief Secretary had totally failed to 'give an impetus to the now almost stagnant business of land purchase.'[1] But this was not Long's fault: the original estimates on which the Act had been based had proved wholly insufficient and sales had come to a standstill only because the Treasury could not find the necessary money. Throughout the summer and autumn of 1905 Long considered amending the Act so that landowners might be obliged to receive part payment in stock. He was very worried that landlords and tenants would become restless in cases where sale and purchase prices had been agreed, but nothing could be done for lack of finance.

Unfortunately for Long, the Landowners' Convention was vehemently opposed to part payment in stock: the Wyndham Act clearly stated that the Land Commission would meet the full purchase price of all estates in cash. And Long could not afford to upset the landlords. The root of the trouble was simple: Wyndham's Act had been much more successful than the government of the day had anticipated. Long tried to speed up purchases by offering the landlords a moiety in cash, but their vigorous opposition, coupled with that of the Nationalists in parliament made his position increasingly difficult.

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[1] Irish Times, 14 Nov. 1905.

The landlords wanted it both ways: they wanted to expedite sales of their estates and they wanted full and immediate payment in cash. With applications under the Land Act running way ahead of estimates on which the financial provisions had been based, the two aims were quite irreconcilable, and Long's objective of effecting vast changes of ownership of land in Ireland without upsetting the landlords was frustrated by Treasury constraints.

Even so, land purchases went steadily through during his period as Chief Secretary. Priority was not given to particular Irish landlords who happened to be supporters of the government, as it had been in Wyndham's day, nor was intimidation or crime ignored for the sake of a quiet life. If more money had been forthcoming then Long would have ensured that more purchases took place. He received much criticism for shortcomings which were not of his making and which he was powerless to put right; he received little praise for administering the Land Act with total impartiality. On the contrary, the landlords frequently made his life difficult by refusing to see that shortage of money was the overriding factor.

Balfour had promoted Long in March 1905 because he had no choice; he had also supported Long against Lord Dudley because he had no choice. Such a state of affairs hardly encouraged good working relations, and the enmity between

the two men which was to culminate in Balfour's resignation in 1911 and Long's bid for the party leadership finds its origin in this period. Long knew that Balfour privately supported Wyndham and he knew that he, Long, was tolerated rather than trusted. When Balfour began in the autumn of 1905 to consider an early general election, Long emerged as the focus of opposition within the party. There were two reasons for this: he recognised that the Unionist party would be defeated throughout the country; and he feared that he would be forced to leave Ireland before his policy had had time to take a firm hold. As early as September Long told the prime minister that a general election would be a 'débâcle' for Conservatives from which they would not recover for years.[1] Almost alone amongst the party leadership Long predicted not only that the Liberals would win, - this was widely expected - but also that their victory would be overwhelming. His analysis of the party's prospects was quite sound:

> Could there be a worse time than this Autumn?... our organisations are only beginning to recover from the shock of the fiscal bombshell.... No human being outside the Cabinet would understand the need to dissolve, all would be furious.... I can see no reason for a Dissolution.... I am convinced we shall be hopelessly beaten...[2]

As rumours of an impending general election intensified

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[1] See Long to Balfour, 6 Sept. 1905, B.P., Add. MS. 49776.
[2] Long to Balfour, 11 Sept. 1905, ibid.

Long received numerous letters from party supporters deprecating a dissolution. His advice was based on a much surer grasp of party feeling than Balfour possessed, a fact which became all too obvious with the Liberals' landslide victory in January 1906.

Irish Unionists naturally feared that Long's departure would herald the return of devolution proposals in one form or another. His contention that Balfour should hang on at least until the spring, if only for the sake of Ireland, was based on the opinions of a considerable number of the government's own supporters; he opposed Balfour in the sure knowledge that he had the backing of Unionists throughout Ireland. But Balfour would not be swayed, nor did he recognise the immense damage that electoral humiliation would do to his own prestige within the party. On 30 November Long issued a final warning, commenting that 'resignation now means disaster to Ireland and ruin to the Unionist cause.'[1] Four days later Balfour resigned and the election campaign began.

Long also had a personal reason to be annoyed: his own seat, Bristol South, was far from safe. The constituency contained the business centre of the city as well as an industrial population of miners, dockers, brewery and tobacco workers for whom tariff reform and 'food taxes' was the major issue.[2] Long campaigned vigorously

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[1]Long to Balfour, copy, 30 Nov. 1905, W.L.P., WRO 947/62.

[2]Henry Pelling, Social Geography of British Elections, 1885-1910 (London, 1967), p. 146.

to retain this marginal seat, although he was persistently embarrassed by press allegations, which were quite true, that he intended taking a safe Irish seat in the event of losing Bristol. On 13 December he addressed a meeting at the Parochial Hall, Knowle;[1] the next day he addressed his constituents at the Ford Memorial Hall, Bedminster;[2] and on 19 December he spoke yet again.[3] In all of these speeches Long stressed the importance of guarding against home rule, dealing only perfunctorily with tariff reform. He carefully avoided offering any explanation for the government's resignation and said very little about future policy on any issue save Ireland. He was well received and suffered only minimal heckling, but his defeat must have come as no surprise. As a percentage of the total poll Long's vote slumped from 53 in 1900 to less than 40 in January 1906.[4] Given the unpopularity of the government and the nature of the constituency, this was a respectable result. Long gratefully accepted the offer of Dublin County (South), thus cementing his ties with Irish Unionism. He was never again to represent a constituency in his own part of the country.

Between March and December 1905 Long gained a reputation as a hard Chief Secretary. To what extent was such a

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[1]For a report of Long's speech see The Bristol Times and Mirror, 14 Dec. 1905.

[2]For a report of Long's speech see ibid., 15 Dec. 1905.

[3]For a report of Long's speech see ibid., 20 Dec. 1905.

[4]Pelling, Social Geography, p. 144.

reputation deserved? It was certainly true that firm imposition of the law was the hallmark of Long's tenure of the Irish Office and it was this policy which endeared him to Irish Unionists. By the end of his administration lawlessness was declining, as Irish landlords were the first to point out. The following are typical of many letters which Long received during November and December. Lord Drogheda wrote:

> Owing to the firm manner in which law and order has been maintained since your appointment, parts of the country which appeared to be getting quite out of hand have quieted down.... There has been a good harvest, and rents are being cheerfully paid in most places - In my own case the rent collection has, so far, been better than for many years.[1]

And Lord Clonbrock testified that 'the firmness and justice of your policy has had a most marked effect....'[2]

The Conservative press in Britain, too, was enthusiastic. The Outlook, under the auspices of J.L. Garvin, praised Long for extricating the 'Unionist administration from a morass of weakness and intrigue' and attributed his success to 'quiet firmness and discernment in the choice and management of men. From the moment when he commenced to rescue Irish administration ... he has shown an excellence of judgement, a cool grasp of fact and a power of work which mark him out for a conspicuous place in the

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[1]Drogheda to Long, 3 Nov. 1905, W.L.P., WRO 947/116.
[2]Clonbrock to Long, 3 Nov. 1905, ibid.

Unionist party of the future.'[1] And The Times of 13 December published a eulogistic appraisal, commenting that Long would be remembered for 'the wonderful improvement which less than a year of his firm and just administration has effected in the state of Ireland.'

But Long had not really been as firm or as hard as these panegyrics would suggest. He had presided over a small increase in the strength of the R.I.C.[2] and he had administered the Land Act as generously as the Treasury would permit, yet in practice he had done nothing to combat the rising tide of nationalism within Ireland itself. He had spent considerable time studying the activities of various nationalist groups, yet he was almost lenient when dealing with sedition, proscribing only six meetings of the United Irish League during his term of office.[3] All that he had done as Chief Secretary was to ensure that criminals were brought to justice whenever possible. He refused to turn a blind eye to nationalist lawlessness, but he equally made no attempt to suppress nationalist opinions or activities, except in the case of the Irish language subsidy. To this extent, his reputation was undeserved.

Long also gained the reputation in 1905 of being a difficult man to work with. This was largely the result of his disputes with MacDonnell and Lord Dudley, disputes

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[1] The Outlook, 9 Dec. 1905.

[2] Long's papers relating to the R.I.C. in 1905 can be found in W.L.P., WRO 947/106.

[3] A list of meetings proscribed by Long can be found in W.L.P., WRO 947/109.

which were more of policy than of personality. Long had taken over an administration which had taken a step in the direction of devolution and the desertion of the very 'raison d'être' of the Unionist party. In these circumstances, it was hardly surprising that there should have been some friction.

Nevertheless, Long could be, and sometimes was, obdurate over venial matters. An example of this is to be found in the dispute which he conducted with the Treasury over the matter of expenses relating to the Chief Secretary's Lodge in Phoenix Park, Dublin. The glassware and crockery at the Lodge had not been provided from Treasury revenues but at the personal expense of the occupants of the official residence, the practice being that each outgoing Chief Secretary had the articles valued and his successor then paid for them. Long did, in fact, pay Wyndham in October for the items.[1] His objection to the system was that as the items decreased in value at each subsequent valuation he would stand to lose. The pettiness of Long's objections can be gleaned from the inventory and valuation of the articles handed over to James Bryce in December 1905:[2] even after including the fee for making the valuation Long actually lost something under one pound. Yet he argued the issue with

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[1] See Long's receipt, 16 Oct. 1905, W.L.P., WRO 947/113.

[2] See 'Inventory and Valuation of Utensils, Glass etc. at Chief Secretary's Lodge, Phoenix Park', 27 Mar. 1905, and subsequently of 28 Dec. 1905, ibid..

the Treasury for months and spent hours preparing memoranda in defence of his objections, despite the fact that the system had proved perfectly satisfactory to all of his predecessors in office.[1]

He also objected to an arrangement, regarding the produce of the Lodge garden, which had been agreed in 1896 and which his predecessors had again found perfectly satisfactory. In return for fruit, vegetables and flowers to be used as he wished, Long was expected as Chief Secretary to contribute to the wages of labourers employed in the grounds of the Lodge. He complained heatedly to the Treasury to have the arrangement changed, and he was evidently tardy in paying the labourers in accordance with the existing agreement, for the Board of Public Works in Dublin informed him in June that the head gardener was understandably annoyed at being personally out of pocket for more than eight pounds in respect of wages which had been paid to a labourer employed solely on cultivating produce for the Chief Secretary's use.[2] Anxious for reimbursement and wary of approaching Long directly, the head gardener had complained to the Board. Long paid up in the end, but it was only after carping bitterly to the Treasury and causing embarrassment both to his head gardener and to the Irish Board of Public Works. It was always one

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[1]Copies of Long's letters and memoranda to the Treasury on this issue can be found in his papers, ibid.

[2]See Henry Williams, secretary to the Irish Board of Public Works, to Long, 19 June 1905, ibid.

of Long's weaknesses to persist in a futile argument and to make a fuss over petty and unimportant issues once he had taken up a cause. Those who taxed him with petulance and small-mindedness often had justification.

By December 1905, then, Long had established his position as a leading figure within the Conservative party and as a possible focus for discontent at Balfour's leadership. It mattered little that his reputation as a hard, uncompromising Chief Secretary was belied by the fact that he had done nothing to check the spread of nationalism, except to lock up its more rowdy spokesmen. He could count on the support of Irish Unionists, an important group within the party. Indeed, on 30 November he had been presented with an Address, signed by forty-eight leading Unionist figures in Ireland - Catholic and Protestant peers, large landowners and influential Dublin businessmen - requesting him to continue in parliament to watch over Irish interests, for there was 'no one to whom Irish Unionists can look for guidance and leadership with more confidence.'[1] Ireland had become for Long a powerbase over which Balfour had little influence.

The Liberal victory of January 1906 actually bolstered Long's prestige within the party, for it proved that his political prescience had been sound, Balfour's unsound. As Long had told Jack Sandars in October, electoral

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[1]The Address was forwarded to Long on 30 Nov. 1905 by Sir Rowland Blennerhassett. See W.L.P., WRO 947/117.

defeat would be 'a hopeless reverse for wh. the P.M. wd. be blamed.'[1] Many Conservatives had expected defeat; few had expected such total disaster. Long's knowledge of the poor state of the party's organisation and of the unpopularity of tariff reform had enabled him to foresee an overwhelming Liberal victory. He tried to warn Balfour of the folly of an early dissolution, and when his advice went unheeded and events proved him right he made no secret of his annoyance and frustration. Within Conservative circles he made it clear that he had a low opinion of Balfour's capacities as a leader. To Lady Londonderry, for example, he reported on 22 December that Balfour's speeches were not those of a 'fighting man who wants to win.... I am sick ... and terribly disillusioned - confidence, once destroyed, does not easily rise again.'[2] He realised only too well that tariff reform lost votes. Already, he was marked out as a possible challenger for the party leadership, the candidate of all those not to be counted amongst Chamberlain's followers. When the Conservative party went into opposition in the new parliament of 1906 Long was in a strong position. Apart from Joseph Chamberlain, Long was the only person to whom the malcontents could turn for guidance and leadership.

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[1]Long to Sandars, 16 Oct. 1905, S.P., MS. Eng. Hist. c.749, fos. 154-5.

[2]Long to Lady Londonderry, 22 Dec. 1905, L.L.P., D/Lo/C 666(1).

CHAPTER TWO

PARTY LEADER, BUT NOT QUITE, 1906-1914

In his autobiography Long explained away the Conservative defeat of January 1906 by blaming the party's misfortunes on the 'Chinese coolie' agitation. 'The charge had gone home', he wrote, 'and the belief was firmly entertained by the electors that there was danger of the reintroduction of slavery. The people rose, almost as a man, in their steadfast determination to put a stop to anything of the kind.'[1] This splendid nonsense avoided disclosure of his real assessment. At the time, he was firmly of the opinion that Balfour's weak leadership wedded to a policy of 'food taxes' had condemned the party to electoral humiliation.[2] Tariff reformers, too, were fed

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[1] Memories, p. 179.

[2] Long's hostility to the tariff reform campaign was always grounded in the belief that 'food taxes' were an electoral liability. He had had early experience of this as the young MP for Wiltshire East (Devizes), a seat which he lost in 1892. On 12 May 1892 Lord Salisbury, addressing a conference at Hastings of the National Union of Conservative Associations, had spoken of the damage to British trade being done by foreign protective tariffs, and he hinted that Britain might be forced to retaliate with its own tariffs, thus raising the spectre of 'dear bread'. Long attributed his defeat in Devizes to this speech, an opinion which he made clear to Aretas Akers-Douglas in a letter dated 11 July 1892. The defeat, he wrote, 'was a bad blow for me and quite unexpected till last week when they produced their dear bread cry and quoted Lord S's Hastings speech: there is no doubt I owe my defeat entirely to that speech: the labourers are an ignorant lot and swallowed it whole.... Of course I feel this jib as it is severing a very old connection - but it can't be helped.' This letter is published in full in 3rd Viscount Chilston, Chief Whip, The Political Life and Times of Aretas Akers-Douglas, 1st Viscount Chilston (London, 1961), p. 242. Long regarded 'food taxes' in this light for the remainder of

up with Balfour's leadership, and many thought that the best course would be to replace Balfour with Joseph Chamberlain. On 31 January, for example, Edward Saunderson told Austen Chamberlain that his father would be the best candidate and that Long was 'absolutely at one' with this view - a most unlikely description of Long's attitude.[1]

In the new parliament Long became a natural focus for many of those who were dissatisfied with Balfour's performance; and in the six months following the election he was bombarded with letters imploring him either to insist on decisive leadership from Balfour or seize the leadership himself.[2] Even Joseph Chamberlain, it seems,

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his political career, and this early defeat in Devizes no doubt contributed to the strength of his feeling against the tariff reform crusade. Indeed, he took the defeat - by the narrow margin of only 138 votes - very badly, accusing his successful opponent, in the columns of The Times, of misrepresenting Conservative policy. The victor, though little known at the time, was Long's close neighbour from Monkton Farleigh, Charles Hobhouse, a future Liberal cabinet minister. Long's essentially pragmatic attitude towards tariff reform is well illustrated by a conversation recorded by Sir Almeric Fitzroy on 16 June 1903: '... I said to Walter Long, "You are an adherent of Chamberlain, are you not?" "Yes", he replied, "more or less." "I suppose", was my rejoinder, "by that you mean that the test of his case lies in its applicability?" "Yes", he said, "that is why I used the words more or less." ' See Sir Almeric Fitzroy, Memoirs, 2 Vols. (London, n.d. [1925?]), 1, 138. 'Long's parliamentary secretary, William Bull, recorded a similar conversation over two years later: 'I thought he was in favour of retaliation and possible protection - He said it was the duty of the Conservative Party to stay in power. If therefore the country did not want retaliation we had better drop it for the present....' Bull's diary, 13 Oct. 1905, Bu.P., 3/12.

[1] See Saunderson to Austen Chamberlain, 31 Jan. 1906, A.C.P., AC 7/2/4.

[2] Many of these letters can be found in L.P., Add. MS. 62410.

contemplated replacing Balfour with Long after the electoral catastrophe. At a Liberal Unionist meeting in January Chamberlain first aired the suggestion, but it gained little ground amongst the senior men of both wings of the party as Lord Lansdowne, apparently, 'immediately jumped on the proposal and nothing more came of it.' This, at least, was the story told over five years later by Pike Pease, who had been present at the Liberal Unionist meeting, to Robert Sanders, the Conservative Member for Bridgwater from 1910 to 1923.[1] The story has a certain plausibility. It is well known that Chamberlain was dissatisfied with Balfour's performance and at least toyed with the idea of making a challenge for the leadership himself. Knowing both that his age was against him and that as a Liberal Unionist he could never be acceptable to the bulk of the party, Chamberlain may well have regarded Long, who was, after all, committed in principle to tariff reform, as an ideal candidate. As yet there was no animosity between Long and Austen Chamberlain - this began only in 1907 with the campaign against the Unionist free traders.

On 2 February 1906 Balfour dined at Prince's Gardens with the two Chamberlains, and Joseph called for a party meeting to decide between the rival fiscal programmes. Balfour, he suggested, should relinquish the party leadership to Long in the event of a victory for tariff reform.[2]

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[1]Diary of Sir Robert Sanders (Lord Bayford), Research Dept., Conservative and Unionist Central Office, entry for 5 Aug. 1911. This source is hereafter cited as Sanders diary.

[2]Max Egremont, Balfour, A Life of Arthur James Balfour (London, 1980), p. 208.

Lord Northcliffe, too, seems to have played a characteristically shady role in the intrigue, for sometime early in February he summoned Sir William Bull,[1] Long's private parliamentary secretary, and gave him so-called 'conclusive proof' that the Chamberlain faction, fed up with Balfour's vacillation, was ready and willing to follow Long. On the basis of this 'proof' Bull advised Long to make an immediate challenge for the leadership as the only man acceptable to both wings of the party: 'You see, after all if B. [Balfour] will not lead and C. [Chamberlain] will not lead who is there but you?... the introduction of your name is a spontaneous, unengineered growth....'[2] Pease's story is further confirmed

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[1]Sir William Bull was Conservative MP for Hammersmith and a leading figure amongst Long's backbench supporters. Head of the firm of Bull and Bull Solicitors, of Lincoln's Inn and Hammersmith, he was for many years Long's closest political confidant. He was also chairman of J.W. Singer and Sons of Frome, Somerset, a post which gave him a commercial interest in Long's part of the country. He was knighted in 1906 and was particularly useful to Long when it came to 'inspiring' favourable newspaper articles. For example, during the cabinet struggle in the autumn of 1905 as to whether the government should stay in office or fight an election, Long had exploited Bull's contacts with the editors to promote his view that Balfour should carry on. Bull's diary reveals the extent to which Long was able to manipulate the Tory press. A typical entry reads: 'I went onto see Buckle.... He quite fell in with my views and I sketched the leader. In the meantime I had got on to George Armstrong and arranged a leader in the "Globe". Then I went to Charles Watney of the "Daily Mail" - They only have one leader and that was already in type but I shall arrange for him to see Long....' Bull's diary, 7 Nov. 1905, Bu.P., 3/12. Long did not exactly have a 'tame' press, but he was certainly able to place articles when the occasion demanded. Bull put his own knighthood down to the 'fortune of circumstance that I am able to write readable leaders late at night.' Bull's diary, 11 Dec. 1905, ibid.

[2]Bull to Long, 5 Feb. 1906, L.P., Add. MS. 62409. Bull mistakenly dated this letter 5 Feb. 1905.

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by a letter which J.L. Garvin, a keen admirer of Chamberlain, wrote to Leo Maxse on 4 February:

> A united party will not follow Joe, and he never was wiser than in refusing to lead. I am perfectly certain that at least a score of nominal tariff reformers ... will rat to Balfour if there is a split - if Long is the man he ought to be the game is our own, but the sentimental reaction prematurely created in Balfour's favour is dangerous.[1]

But Long was not the man to march to Chamberlain's tune, and he paid no attention to Bull's promptings, content to leave the leadership contest for another day. Bull worked assiduously in pushing Long forward and in stirring the backbenchers against Balfour despite the fact that Long would not intrigue openly.[2] Nonetheless, the episode shows not only incipient dissatisfaction with Balfour's leadership, but also that Long was in many quarters regarded as his most probable successor as early as 1906. The so-called 'Valentine letters', published on 14 February, put a temporary end to the speculations over the leadership: Balfour gave a general endorsement to the principle of tariff reform in return for a unanimous vote of confidence. Chamberlain professed himself satisfied; Long waited in the wings, nominally a tariff reformer and a loyal supporter of Balfour - as

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[1]Garvin to Maxse, 4 Feb. 1906, quoted in Egremont, Balfour, p. 208.

[2]Bull recorded that he had 'manoeuvred a little with a view to placing Long on the throne but am slightly doubtful about his temper.' Bull's diary, 1 July 1906, 'Retrospect for the first half of 1906', Bu.P., 3/13.

well as his most likely replacement.

At the same time, Long took a keen interest in the affairs of The Outlook, whose editor, J.L. Garvin, had been a strong supporter of his Irish policy. He was therefore anxious that both Garvin and Edward Grigg, the assistant editor, would remain at their desks despite differences with the paper's owner, C.S. Goldman. Negotiating through his secretary, Long had succeeded by the autumn in inducing Lord Iveagh to buy the paper for Walter Guiness. With Garvin secure as editor, Long believed he would have a friendly paper with which to assist his own political ambitions, but the arrangement was completely disrupted in November when Walter Guinness refused to keep Garvin on, so that, ultimately, Long's circumspect negotiations brought no personal gain. Garvin went off to begin his famous association with The Observer and Long promptly abandoned his interest in The Outlook.[1]

The reopening of the dispute over the precise nature of Sir Anthony MacDonnell's appointment was Long's first major attempt to challenge Balfour's authority within the party. Knowing that he could count on the support of Irish Unionists, Long naturally chose an issue connected with Irish government. On 29 August 1906 Long addressed a meeting of the Irish Unionist Alliance in Dublin. After condemning home rule he went on to refute the suggestion that the only reason that he had allowed MacDonnell to

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[1]This paragraph is based on Alfred M. Gollin, "The Observer" and J.L. Garvin (London, 1960), pp. 15-16.

stay in office when he had been Chief Secretary was that Balfour had been wary of 'certain correspondence or letters which were said to be in the possession of certain people'[1] and he challenged his critics to make these supposedly compromising letters public. Whilst defending his own administration in 1905 he deliberately raised doubts over the general course of Conservative policy in Ireland: 'I believe there is ... abundant reason for many Irish Unionists to ask in tones of bitter indignation, ... why, when the Unionist flag was flying, were principles adopted which were not consonant with Unionist principles?'[2]

Long was seeking not merely to condemn Wyndham's tenure of the Irish Office in order to justify his own: he was in part responding to the overtures of Balfour's critics. He could hardly condemn Wyndham without at the same time condemning Balfour. Long chose to issue his denunciations at a full meeting of the I.U.A. in the knowledge that he would receive maximum publicity, and his speech was reported prominently in the newspapers of 30 August. The Irish Times commented that the speech was 'among the greatest of his services to Ireland.'[3] What it neglected to point out was that the speech was also among the greatest of his services

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[1]Report of Long's speech, The Times, 30 Aug. 1906.

[2]Ibid.; Ronan Fanning, 'The Unionist Party and Ireland, 1906-10', Irish Historical Studies, 15 (1966), p. 153.

[3]Irish Times, 30 Aug. 1906.

to the furtherance of his own political career.

MacDonnell, irritated by Long's accusations, promptly wrote an open letter,[1] thus enabling Long to carry on the argument in public. Wyndham, too, played into Long's hands by requesting an explanation for the speech,[2] receiving instead a damning indictment of his Irish administration. Long castigated Wyndham for ever accepting MacDonnell as a colleague and accused him bluntly of making no effort to maintain the law.[3] In the newspapers, Long denied all of MacDonnell's claims and stated that in 1905 he had arrived at a clear understanding with Sir Anthony of his role in Irish affairs, an understanding which

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[1] MacDonnell's letter was published in The Times, 31 Aug. 1906.

[2] See Wyndham to Long, 30 Aug. 1906, W.L.P., WRO 947/126/15.

[3] Long to Wyndham, copy, 2 Sept. 1906, ibid. John Biggs-Davison in his George Wyndham, A Study in Toryism (London, 1951), pp. 176-7, glosses over the differences between Long and Wyndham in barely a paragraph and cites Long's warm tribute to Wyndham in Memories, written nearly twenty years later, as evidence of the relationship between the two men. Nor do J.W. Mackail and Guy Wyndham, The Life and Letters of George Wyndham, 2 Vols. (London, 1924), publish any of Wyndham's letters to Long relating to the controversy. For some reason best known to himself, Long made light in his autobiography of every disagreement and difference in which he had ever engaged during his political career - Sir Charles Petrie, Long's biographer, described Memories, somewhat euphemistically, as 'a model of discretion'. Consequently, the descriptions in Memories cannot be taken as evidence of the personality, policies or achievements of any of Long's contemporaries. George Wyndham is no exception to this rule. Long's letters make it abundantly clear that he regarded Wyndham's tenure of the Irish Office as a betrayal of the Irish policies on which the very existence of the Unionist party was based.

MacDonnell had accepted.[1] He knew full well that Wyndham had conferred special powers on MacDonnell and that he had never whilst in office clarified the position satisfactorily. But he could hardly admit this in 1906.

Long had inherited MacDonnell from Wyndham and he had been forced to put up with him, but finding himself out of office a year later, with MacDonnell now the darling of Liberal policy in Ireland, Long found it convenient to paint a picture which was somewhat blurred at the edges. MacDonnell must have rued the day he decided to enter into a public controversy with Long and to conduct it in the columns of the newspapers, for Long's open letters did the Under-Secretary little good, especially as civil servants were expected to refrain from indulging in public argument.

Balfour soon perceived that Long's attacks on Wyndham were an inevitable challenge to his own authority. On 5 September he attempted to sidetrack Long into attacking not his own party over the terms of MacDonnell's appointment, but the Liberals over the precise nature of its continuation. He attempted to dismiss the issue out of hand: 'I find it very difficult to understand what all the row is about, or what it is wants clearing up.... In any case, it seems to me to have lost all interest and importance...'[2] Long, however, was determined to enhance his own status as the paladin of Unionism, and by

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[1]Long's letters were published in The Times, 31 Aug., 1 Sept., and 4 Sept. 1906.

[2]Balfour to Long, 5 Sept. 1906, L.P., Add. MS. 62403.

the end of the month he had enlisted the support of Austen Chamberlain, who promised to insist that Balfour must repudiate all suggestions that the party had ever toyed with home rule 'whether called devolution or not.'[1] There was a kind of tacit agreement between the two men: Chamberlain would defer to Long's views on Ireland if Long would in turn accept Chamberlain's on tariff reform.

Chamberlain accordingly wrote to Lord Lansdowne on 26 September expressing his support for Long's campaign and emphasising the foolhardiness of allowing Balfour 'to sacrifice himself and his power for good to shield Wyndham.'[2] Emerging triumphant from his newspaper campaign, Long hoped to force Balfour to publish all the correspondence relating to MacDonnell's appointment, correspondence which would certainly damage Wyndham and possibly embarrass Balfour. From Long's point of view, the greater the embarrassment to Balfour, the greater the vindication of his own position. He wanted to force Balfour to make an unequivocal declaration of the party's Irish policy, a declaration which would confirm him as the champion of traditional Unionism and boost his popularity with Balfour's detractors.

On 27 September Chamberlain agreed that 'as regards Wyndham he must fight his own battle',[3] thus encouraging Long to tell Balfour that he expected a clear policy

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[1]Chamberlain to Long, 27 Sept. 1906, W.L.P., WRO 947/126/2.

[2]Chamberlain to Lansdowne, copy, 26 Sept. 1906, A.C.P., AC 7/4/4.

[3]Chamberlain to Long, 27 Sept. 1906, loc. cit.

statement denouncing Wyndham.[1] Not surprisingly, Balfour refused even to consider publishing the controversial correspondence, and, as he had repeatedly dissociated himself from schemes of devolution, he was not prepared to blacken Wyndham's reputation still further.[2] Realising that Balfour was prepared to stand his ground, Chamberlain suddenly lost his inclination for a fight, and on 5 October he changed his tune by announcing to Long that 'it is natural we should save Wyndham as much as possible.'[3] Lansdowne, too, hoped that Long might be persuaded to abandon his attacks,[4] but on 7 October Long still intended to make a fight of it, telling Lady Londonderry: 'I am in the middle of a long correspondence with Arthur - his weakness is heartbreaking, he cares for nothing except

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[1] Long to Balfour, copy, 2 Oct. 1906, W.L.P., WRO 947/126/1.

[2] Balfour to Long, 3 Oct. 1906, ibid.

[3] Chamberlain to Long, 5 Oct. 1906, W.L.P., WRO 947/126/2. Chamberlain seems to have changed his tune after receiving a letter from Gerald Balfour, dated 2 Oct. 1906. Gerald Balfour raised the rather embarrassing difficulty that Lansdowne had been shown a draft of the original devolution proposals. If this became known, Long's contention that nobody in the cabinet, save Wyndham, had tampered with devolution would look very doubtful, and the party would inevitably be subjected to further attacks from Irish Unionists. Chamberlain does not seem to have passed Gerald Balfour's information on to Long. Publication of the controversial letters might have led to its disclosure, which could have made Long look rather foolish. See Gerald Balfour to Chamberlain, 2 Oct. 1906, A.C.P., AC 7/4/10.

[4] See Lansdowne to Long, 3 Oct. 1906, W.L.P., WRO 947/126/6.

saving G.W. I am quite determined ... nothing will change me.... I shall take my own course and I shall speak out.'[1] But he was not as determined as he made out. After a letter from Chamberlain on the following day,[2] pleading that he reconsider his position in the interests of party unity, Long reluctantly conceded that Balfour was not to be moved. By 10 October Long had no choice but to 'agree to anything whether I like it or not provided it does not give away our friends'[3] and a week later he was reduced to issuing idle threats to Jack Sandars.[4] The dispute died down, Balfour avoided publication, and a shaky party unity was restored.

The controversy in 1906 over the Wyndham-MacDonnell correspondence has generally been interpreted as an attempt by Long to cement his leadership of the Irish Unionist cause.[5] This was part of Long's intention: as

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[1]Long to Lady Londonderry, 7 Oct. 1906, L.L.P., D/Lo/C 666(5).

[2]Chamberlain to Long, 8 Oct. 1906, W.L.P., WRO 947/126/2. Balfour's clearly expressed annoyance no doubt contributed to Chamberlain's sudden desire to bring the dispute to an end. Balfour expostulated: 'I think it is perfectly outrageous that I ... should be suspected of tampering with Home Rule upon evidence on which you would not hang a cat.' Balfour to Chamberlain, 8 Oct. 1906, A.C.P., AC 7/4/16.

[3]Long to Chamberlain, 10 Oct. 1906, A.C.P., AC 7/4/22.

[4]Long wrote to Sandars: 'I gather ... that G.W. is to be upheld in everything, & I can't help wondering what the Chief would say if asked by our people what he thinks of G.W.'s administration.... I am sometimes inclined to think it would be a good thing if I left front bench & sat behind.' Long to Sandars, 17 Oct. 1906, S.P., MS. Eng. Hist. c.752, fos. 107-10.

[5]See, for example, Fanning, op. cit., p. 154.

he argued to Balfour, there had never been 'any clear indication whether G.W.'s policy or mine was accepted by the leaders....'[1] But it was not Long's only reason for causing so much trouble. His own appointment as Chief Secretary had, after all, been a reassertion of traditional Unionism and a telling abnegation of the policies, especially devolution, with which Wyndham had been branded. His support from Irish Unionists was already strong; he did not need to resuscitate an old issue in order to secure his position. Rather, Long was showing to all those who were discontent with Balfour that he, Long, was prepared to stand up and issue a public challenge, that he was prepared to threaten party unity in order to secure policies which he believed in, and that he expected firm, decisive leadership.

Moreover, Wyndham invited Long's animadversions by continued flirtation with devolution schemes and by association with their two principal sponsors, MacDonnell and Dunraven. Early in the new parliament, on 19 February, Wilfred Scawen Blunt, poet, politician and fervent devotee of Ireland's cause, recorded in his diary:

> George's own relations with Long are curious.... They are still quite cordial ... but George has told him that during the coming session he means to take his own line about Ireland, and that Long must answer for himself if the late Government there is attacked. He [i.e. Wyndham] tells me in great confidence that he

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[1]Long to Balfour, copy, 2 Oct. 1906, W.L.P., WRO 947/126/1.

> has received indirect overtures recently from O'Brien. ... Also Dunraven has made him advances, and yesterday he had met Sir Anthony MacDonnell, and talked with him on the most friendly terms.... All this encourages him to take a line of his own about Ireland.[1]

Clearly, Long had good grounds for his suspicions.

Long's stand in 1906 certainly annoyed and irritated his colleagues amongst the party leadership; it also appealed to a rank and file increasingly disillusioned with that leadership. And it cemented Long's reputation not just with Irish Unionists, but with all those members of the party seeking an alternative, other than the rigours of tariff reform offered by the Chamberlain camp, to the subtleties and prevarications of Balfour's leadership. For six months the party malcontents had encouraged Long to take a stand against Balfour. His behaviour in the autumn of 1906 was partly a response to that encouragement.

The general election of 1906 had left the depleted ranks of the Conservative party divided and mutually hostile. It has been estimated that the party, after it had settled down in the Commons, was almost exactly cut in two between the extreme tariff reformers, or whole-hoggers, and their opponents, the Balfourites and free-fooders, although all such estimates are necessarily open to doubt.[2] Long was

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[1]Wilfred Scawen Blunt, My Diaries, Being a Personal Narrative of Events, 1888-1914, 2 Vols. (London, 1919-20), 2, 131.

[2]There can be no unequivocal analysis of the strength of each faction, and the numbers of each group will vary from year to year. One obvious problem of measurement is that a member could, out of loyalty to Balfour, be a Balfourite for the sake of party unity, yet still prefer to go the

one of the occupants of what has aptly been described as a 'halfway house, imprecisely located, but whose doors were open to all moderate men.'[1] Long called himself a tariff reformer but he was always a moderate and detested the activities of the more extreme groups within the party, especially those of the 'Confederacy', a secret society pledged to purge the party of free traders. He saw no reason why free traders like the Cecils should be persecuted, an attitude which in 1907 brought him into bitter conflict with Austen Chamberlain and his followers, and almost from the moment that Bonar Law became an important figure in the party Long clashed with him. Remarks from Bonar Law in February that Long's

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whole hog. Long is an excellent case in point. He supported tariff reform, even food taxes, in principle, but can certainly not be counted with the Chamberlainites. He was sympathetic towards the free-fooders and tried to help them to remain in the party, but he cannot satisfactorily be counted as one of their number. This leaves the Balfourites, yet Long was consistently one of Balfour's most strident critics. In which camp, then, does one classify him? Neal Blewett, 'Free Fooders, Balfourites, Whole Hoggers: Factionalism within the Unionist Party, 1906-10', Historical Journal 11 (1968), p. 96, estimates the party's strength in the Commons at whole-hoggers 79, Balfourites 49, and free-fooders 31. It is, however, unlikely that the Unionist free traders could have counted on the loyal support of 31 MPs. If they had been as strong as this they would not have been so easily defeated. Historians must agree to differ as to the precise numbers making up each faction. R.C.K. Ensor, for example, in his England, 1870-1914 (Oxford, 1936), p. 386, put the Chamberlainites as high as 109 and the free traders as low as 11. The problem is compounded by Balfour's own ambiguity on the issue, making it impossible to lay down precise guidelines for purposes of classification. A standard Liberal joke at the time was the offer of £100 to anybody who could prove that Balfour was 'a Free Trader, Protectionist, neither or both.'

[1] Blewett, 'Free Fooders, Balfourites, Whole Hoggers', p. 101.

approach to fiscal reform was spineless brought a swift response: 'The propriety of my conduct in the matter cannot I think be doubted.... this is the second statement of a most insulting character which you have made about me recently.'[1]

Long received countless appeals from free fooders throughout 1907 to take up their cause, and his opposition to tariff reform witch-hunts at constituency level led him by the end of the year to threaten Balfour with open rebellion. On 12 June Lord Hugh Cecil asked Long to put pressure on Balfour to issue a statement condemning the behaviour of the Norwood constituency party, a statement which could act as a warning to the tariff reformers and guarantee that sitting members would not become 'mere gramophones echoing the party songs.'[2] Long did his best and took a leading role in attempts to arrive at individual reconciliation,[3] but Balfour's reluctance to take a firm line gave him little chance of success, and by the end of September he was plainly considering whether he should challenge Balfour:

> There seems ... to be no real confidence and trust in the Party, they are like a pack of ... hounds, each hunting his own particualr quarry and looking to his own master and paying no attention to the Hunt servants or to each other. It is simply deplorable: the feeling

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[1]Long to Bonar Law, 20 Feb. 1907, B.L.P., 18/3/31.

[2]Lord Hugh Cecil to Long, 12 June 1907, W.L.P., WRO 947/444.

[3]Richard A. Rempel, Unionists Divided (Newton Abbot, 1972), pp. 181-2.

> against A.J.B. has increased.... I have come across ... plain treachery among the advanced section of the Tariff Reformers.[1]

The appeals of the malcontents were beginning, once again, to take effect. On 24 September Lord Salisbury wrote: 'I suppose if anything can at anytime be done it must be by you and others likeminded.'[2] And on the same day Long confirmed to Lady Londonderry that 'We badly want a Disraeli just now in my opinion.'[3]

What really annoyed Long, however, was Chamberlain's attempt in October to stop him speaking in favour of Abel Smith, a recalcitrant free-fooder whom Chamberlain wanted to ostracise. He told Chamberlain that the tariff reformers' campaign of ostracism was misguided, likely to lead only to further electoral defeats: 'I cannot admit that men like A.H.S. ought to be ostracised ... nor do I believe in any form of ostracism as calculated ... to help our cause.... Your policy risks the loss of staunch Unionists and ... of some Unionist seats....'[4] Long was much more annoyed than this polite, if blunt, refusal suggests. The idea that Chamberlain should presume to interfere with his speeches Long found intolerable, and on 7 November he told Balfour

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[1]Long to Lady Londonderry, 13 Sept. 1907, L.L.P., D/Lo/C 666(13).

[2]Salisbury to Long, 24 Sept. 1907, L.P., Add. MS. 62411.

[3]Long to Lady Londonderry, 24 Sept. 1907, L.L.P, D/Lo/C 666(16).

[4]Long to Chamberlain, copy, n.d., but written in reply to Chamberlain's letter of 31 Oct. 1907, L.P., Add. MS. 62405.

that steps ought to be taken to keep Chamberlain in line: 'I am not a touchy person, and I have no silly notions about my position ... but there are some things I will only stand from my leader ... and I think there ought to be some discipline and order in these things.'[1] This at least brought a reply from Jack Sandars that it was quite in order for him to speak in favour of Abel Smith,[2] but Long wanted a clear condemnation of Chamberlain's tactics from Balfour, and on 10 November he told Balfour he wanted a coherent policy declared on which the whole party could stand, failing which he threatened trouble from the backbenches:

> As I have said before I am convinced what the country needs is a strong fighting speech ... going for TR but not in such a way as to enable the extremists to say they have "got you" and for Social Reform, and saying "here is my Standard, Come or go to the devil, and I will go on without you...." I will stand a good deal to serve you ... but if there is not some change ... I can serve equally well and far more comfortably to myself, outside of your "Ex-Cabinet".[3]

Even so, this threat of orchestrating trouble from the

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[1]Long to Balfour, 7 Nov. 1907, B.P., Add. MS. 49776.

[2]Sandars to Long, 9 Nov. 1907, L.P., Add. MS. 62412.

[3]Long to Balfour, copy, 10 Nov. 1907, ibid.; Long supplemented this letter with an appeal to Sandars in which he remarked that 'Arthur's extraordinary weakness towards A.C. has not only to my certain knowledge caused immense annoyance on our own side, but it is the cause of much curious and unpleasant talk among Radicals of eminence.' See Long to Sandars, 10 Nov. 1907, S.P., MS. Eng. Hist. c.754, fos. 109-10.

backbenches still brought nothing from Balfour, and by 24 November Long was reduced to complaining privately that 'Austen is an ass and will ruin the Party if he is not stopped, the only person who can stop him is A.J.B. and he won't!'[1] In other words, Long knew that he did not have enough support to lead an effective rebellion. He could split the party but he could not secure victory for his policy without Balfour's co-operation. All he could do was threaten Balfour - if the threats were ignored he could do nothing about it.[2]

It was for this reason that Long appealed to Bonar Law at the beginning of December, hoping that Chamberlain's lieutenant would prove more amenable to his arguments. In a skilfully worded memorandum Long argued that free trade MPs should not be persecuted, as the party needed every MP it could get, and, anyway, tariff reform would

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[1]Long to Lady Londonderry, 24 Nov. 1907, L.L.P., D/Lo/C 666(25). Long was by now extremely irritated at Chamberlain's behaviour. On the day before he had observed of Chamberlain's letters that 'the patronising style and the ignorance are really extraordinary. The former we must put up with I suppose to please the Chief but it is not pleasant.... A. knows nothing of the ordinary Squire, he [i.e. the squire] loves Protection, but he loves a gentleman much more.' Long to Sandars, 23 Nov. 1907, S.P., MS. Eng. Hist. c.754, fos. 149-52.

[2]In a letter to Selborne Long expressed the opinion that what was doing the party the most damage amongst the electorate was not the policy of tariff reform itself but 'the conviction that there is a division in our ranks, and that the Chief is not determined enough in making his colleagues identify themselves with the policy which he has laid down. You know his temperament as well as I do: You know how incapable he is of doing anything disagreeable to anyone: You know how much he will put up with rather than say unpleasant things.... He knows my views, but he thinks I am too severe in my methods.' Long to Selborne, 25 Nov. 1907, E.S.P., MS. Selborne 73/57-68.

not win a general election in the foreseeable future. For Long, tariff reform was a long term goal, a policy objective for which both the party and the country must be prepared by persuasion and propaganda over a period of several years. It was not something which could be achieved after a short fight.[1] But this argument cut no more ice with Bonar Law than with Chamberlain, and the party's next leader issued the uncompromising reply that 'I am absolutely convinced that the Party cannot possibly be kept with even a semblance of unity except on a definite Tariff Reform basis.'[2]

Faced with this kind of obduracy, Long turned once more to Balfour, this time with an explicit threat that he would bid for the leadership himself. Addressing himself to Jack Sandars, almost as if to avoid the accusation of deliberate disloyalty, Long wrote on 5 December:

> Does he mean to go on till he sees somebody firm eno' in the saddle to enable him to make his bow and does he not care who that somebody is? Does he desire that we should all sit silent?... I think in fairness we ought to know.... I can plainly see that if this is his policy the time must come, and fairly soon, when some of us will have to cut ourselves adrift. I have always hoped that this would never be my fate but I begin to fear it will.... The most loyal fall away

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[1] Memorandum by Long, n.d., but enclosed with letter of 1 Dec. 1907, B.L.P., 18/3/49.

[2] Bonar Law to Long, copy, 3 Dec. 1907, ibid., 18/8/5.

> when they realise that the disloyal find as much favour as they.[1]

The message was clear: either Balfour must make up his mind to go, in which case he must say so soon, or he must lay down a clear policy acceptable to both wings of the party. Failure to do so would provoke a split, a split which Long might himself precipitate.

Long seems to have been encouraged by Lord Selborne to push Balfour into taking a stand. Writing from South Africa, Selborne's advice was plain: 'I suggest that you force A.J.B. into stiffening his back, even at the risk of being unpleasant to somebody.... I confess it seems pure madness that ... Unionists should be still quarelling and not concentrated.'[2] So strongly did Selborne feel that he reiterated the point in a second letter written the same day: 'I want to emphasise the fact that, if I were at home with you, I should take the strongest possible stand against ostracism; that I should endeavour to do my utmost in conjunction with my old colleagues to stiffen A.J.B....'[3] But Selborne was not at home and Long had to wage the battle alone.

Christmas came and went, and Balfour was still trying to dodge the issue, causing Long to remark that 'the

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[1]Long to Sandars, copy, 5 Dec. 1907, L.P., Add. MS. 62412.

[2]Selborne to Long, copy, 21 Dec. 1907, E.S.P., MS. Selborne 71/139-50.

[3]Ibid., 71/151-3.

Country and the Party may go to the d—l! It is all quite plain to scores of us, but the Chief is blind!'[1] Realising that his threats were getting nowhere, Long made one last plea on 29 December, urging Balfour to

> Let ... re-union become possible: it is not ... so long as Austen, Bonar Law and others practice (sic) a totally different policy.... I am sure if something is not done soon there will be an even worse smash ... than there has been yet. Look at all the evidence ... rank ... disloyalty, Austen dictating to me for whom I shall or shall not speak, Bonar Law openly stating that he would rather lose 20 Unionist seats than have Hugh [Cecil] ... back in the House![2]

This attitude was no more successful, for Balfour merely replied that 'nobody has ever yet suggested ... a means by which a Candidate who declines to accept the Party Programme in its entirety is to be safe from difficulty in his constituency.'[3] Balfour was clearly more willing to upset Long and lose the free traders than he was ready to challenge Chamberlain.

Long was forced to concede that the decisions of the local constituency organisations could not be much altered by pressure from party leaders. 'Already on 4 January he had warned Lord Robert Cecil that 'my power is very slight.'[4]

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[1]Long to Lady Londonderry, 28 Dec. 1907, L.L.P., D/Lo/C 666(32).

[2]Long to Balfour, 29 Dec. 1907, B.P., Add. MS. 49776.

[3]Balfour to Long, 9 Jan. 1908, W.L.P., WRO 947/444.

[4]Long to Lord Robert Cecil, 4 Jan. 1908, Cecil of Chelwood papers (British Library), Add. MS. 51072.

And on 18 January he admitted that 'the Constituencies in an ever increasing degree are determined to have Tariff Reform candidates and with this, it is quite clear, no leader can interfere....'[1] He knew that to defend the Unionist free traders who refused to accept the official Birmingham policy was to wage a futile struggle:

> I am afraid it does no good for one or two of us to denounce proscription on the platform - it only makes those who are determined to drive out Free Traders more bitter and more persistent in their policy. I wish with all my heart we could secure a truce, as I think the present state of things is deplorable.[2]

Gradually, Long's attempts at defending the free traders petered out: he was fighting a losing battle and he knew it. By April 1908 Lord Robert Cecil pointed out with some justification that 'from Arthur we have had nothing. And yet he pretends and perhaps believes that he wishes to keep the U.F.T.s in the Party.'[3] The free traders were doomed within the Conservative party; Long abandoned their cause only when he recognised that this was an inevitable fact.

It has been remarked that in practice Long 'could do nothing and would do very little, but his professions of sympathy prevented the realities of their situation from being clearly understood by the Unionist Free Traders.'[4]

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[1]Long to Lord Robert Cecil, 18 Jan. 1908, ibid.

[2]Long to Lord Robert Cecil, 23 Jan. 1908, ibid.

[3]Lord Robert Cecil to Long, 18 Apr. 1908, W.L.P., WRO 947/444.

[4]Alan Sykes, Tariff Reform in British Politics, 1903-13 (Oxford, 1979), p. 173.

This is perfectly true, but Long was quite sincere in his desire to help the free traders. He used his influence as best he could, stressing his own tariff reform credentials in the hope that such an approach would encourage Balfour and others to take a moderate line. He was certainly not playing a double game of trying to keep in with all sides. Long genuinely deplored both the ruthlessness of the tariff reformers and the way in which the free traders were steadily being beaten into submission. When Lord Robert Cecil lost his seat at the first general election of 1910 Long wrote: 'Personally I profoundly deplore the fact that you will not be amongst us. I hope this terrible blunder will soon be repaired....'[1]

The dispute split the party into two separate camps, and the intense animosity between Chamberlain and Long which was to mark the leadership contest of 1911 stems from this controversy. Long never forgave Chamberlain for foisting a divisive policy on the party and for persecuting anybody who dared to challenge it, especially as he blamed tariff reform for the defeat of 1906. His opinion of Balfour's leadership slumped still further, and he refrained from open revolt only because he knew that the tariff reformers would break away from the party if he made any overt move. He pressed Balfour as hard as he could, but he knew that, to be effective, condemnation

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[1]Long to Lord Robert Cecil, 31 Jan. 1910, Cecil of Chelwood papers, Add. MS. 51072. Cecil had to wait nearly two years to get back into the House.

of Chamberlain and his methods had to come from Balfour. He had no desire to divide the party still further, the very thing for which he denigrated the tariff reformers, but it was impossible for him to defend the free-fooders without inviting a charge of being difficult and divisive himself. He hoped all along that threats would be enough; he never seriously intended to leave the opposition front bench.

A serious attack of neuritis later in 1908 forced Long to take a break from political work and early in 1909 he took a trip to South Africa on his doctor's orders, returning to find the battle over Lloyd George's budget proposals in full swing.[1] The immediate reaction of the Conservative leadership had been hesitant, as Balfour and Lansdowne were reluctant to commit themselves to an attack which might lose votes and which might have to be ignominiously abandoned. During the summer both men played only a secondary role in the agitation against the budget and during the month of June neither appeared on the public platform.[2] It was against this background that on 14 June Long formed the Budget Protest League,[3] intended to rouse public opinion. The inactivity of the

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[1]Long left Rood Ashton on 16 January and did not return home until June.

[2]Neal Blewett, The Peers, the Parties and the People: The British General Elections of 1910 (London, 1972), pp. 73-

[3]See letter by Long, The Times, 14 June 1909.

two leaders convinced Long that he must personally oversee the party's response if the opportunity of encouraging opposition and agitation in the country was not to be missed. Although keenly supported by a considerable section of the Lords and by the City[1] the League was designed to stimulate popular agitation and to dissociate opposition to the budget from the charge that hostility to Lloyd George's proposals was motivated solely by a privileged class seeking protection for its own vested interests. The League was an extension of the party organisation rather than a separate pressure group, and it was merged with the party for the elections of 1910,[2] having been officially wound up by Long at a dinner at the Ritz hotel on 9 December 1909.[3]

Its main achievement was to provoke and sustain an acrimonious debate with the tariff reformers, for Long deliberately ordered his speakers and writers to ignore the subject of fiscal reform altogether.[4] Less than a fortnight after its formation the Liberals responded with their own Budget League, and, with Winston Churchill as president, a vigorous campaign was mounted in the

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[1]Blewett, The Peers, the Parties, the People, p. 77.

[2]Ibid., p. 330, n. 5.

[3]Reproductions of the best known posters produced by the League may be found in 'The Work of the Budget Protest League, A Memento of its Six Months Activities', 18 Dec. 1909, Bu.P., 3/20.

[4]Gollin, "Observer" and Garvin, p. 102; Sykes, Tariff Reform in British Politics, p. 202.

constituencies in support of Lloyd George's proposals, thus undermining Long's efforts to encourage popular opposition. None of Long's speakers could match Churchill's brilliant oratory, and the Liberal campaign had a verve and impact which the Budget Protest League totally lacked. Indeed, some of Long's speakers even suffered the humiliation of having their resolutions defeated at their own meetings.[1]

The Unionist leadership decided to reject the budget sometime in August or September 1909, despite the fact that it was fully recognised that the party could not hope to win an election on the issue.[2] Long's agitation in the country had fallen flat; the cause of rejection was decidedly unpopular. Yet Balfour and Lansdowne

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[1] Annual Register, 1909, p. 186. One of the reasons for the much greater success of the Liberals' counter-organisation, the Budget League, was that Lloyd George, displaying early evidence of his lack of scruple in the raising of political funds, traded in honours in return for sizable donations. J.C. Horsfall, for example, received a baronetcy in return for a 'contribution' of £15,000. The Liberal Budget League therefore had adequate funds for its campaign of meetings and propaganda. See Bruce K. Murray, The People's Budget, 1909-10 (Oxford, 1980), pp. 203-4. Long realised only too well that the impact of his own League was substantially vitiated by its failure to provide first class speakers. In a draft letter amongst his papers Long pointed out that whilst 'Asquith, Lloyd George and Winston Churchill have their hands fairly full ... in Parliament they are able to find time to address whole series of meetings in the country. We must ... take a leaf out of their book.' See draft letter by Long, n.d., but clearly written sometime in the summer or autumn of 1909, W.L.P., WRO 947/428.

[2] For a discussion of the factors influencing Balfour and Lansdowne in favour of rejection see Murray, The People's Budget, pp. 209-23.

believed that they had little option but to fight and hoped that an early general election, by forcing the Liberals to rely on Irish Nationalist votes if they wished to remain in government, would make it much easier for the Conservatives to return to office at a later date. In the words of a recent historian of the budget conflict, rejection was 'necessary in order to avert humiliation and to maintain the fighting spirit of the party, and it was expedient in that they [the Conservative leaders] believed they would stand more of a fighting chance in the long run than if the Budget was allowed to pass the Lords unscathed.'[1]

Long had realised very early that the Liberals were itching for a chance to confront the Lords. Discussing the Education Bill with Balfour in 1906, Long had made it clear that the government should not be provoked and the Lords' veto exercised with restraint. He had never been in favour of disruption of the government's business by means of the Conservatives' built-in majority in the Lords,[2] nor was he ever an intransigent advocate of maintaining the existing structure of the upper House. He realised only too well that reform of the Lords was inseparably linked to the home rule question, and he favoured some reform precisely so that home rule would not be restored to the realm of practical politics. Long wanted the Conservative party to accept, indeed to sponsor, limited

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[1] Ibid., p. 221.

[2] See, for example, Long's letter and memorandum to Balfour, 9 July 1906, W.L.P., WRO 947/458.

reform in the hope that the government would be prepared to make concessions in order to avoid confrontation and that the Lords could thus retain enough power to prevent home rule.

Long acted as chairman of two meetings of Conservative MPs, held on 3 March and 8 March 1910 and called to consider the extent and method of reform which the party should approve. Although there was little unanimity on the subject Long believed it crucial that the leadership produce a working scheme.[1] He had clear and far-sighted views, insisting that reform was both politically necessary and objectively justifiable, recommending that 'an opportunity should be given for the indirect election of representatives of various interests, and that there should be a considerable extension of the life peerage.'[2] He was not in favour of complete abandonment of the hereditary principle but some reform had to be accepted, otherwise the party would have no chance at the next election. He put it bluntly: 'I think we must admit the necessity for reform. In other words, our Candidates must have a definite, clear, and popular scheme to put to the electorate.'[3] The trouble was, Long could find no agreement for any suggestion. 'The real difficulty,' he told Lord Selborne, 'is that nobody's mind is made up as to what he wants. All are clamouring for reform but

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[1]Memorandum by Long, 9 Mar. 1910, W.L.P., WRO 947/447.
[2]Memorandum by Long, 3 Mar. 1910, ibid.
[3]Ibid.

nobody seems to know what is the precise reform which he likes, except of course the Socialists and Nationalists whose idea of reform is destruction.'[1]

Long was being pragmatic and looking for a middle way: the party could not endorse the creation of a wholly popular body, but to insist on full maintenance of the hereditary principle and full power of veto was to invite trouble. Better, then, to argue that whilst the hereditary principle should not lightly be abolished, the Conservative party nevertheless recognised that the Lords could only have real power if responsive to public opinion. This was a policy of classic Conservatism: Long recognised that some reform was inevitable, and it was therefore judicious to sponsor a scheme of mild reform rather than wait to be pushed into accepting Liberal legislation which would open the door to home rule. As he argued to his colleagues, it is better 'to fail on the side of moderation than to expose our position.'[2]

This attitude was maintained by Long throughout 1910 and during the struggle over the Parliament Bill in the following year. He had little hope that a settlement would emerge from the constitutional conference, and at a meeting of Conservative ex-cabinet ministers held at Lansdowne House on 8 November 1910 he was amongst those who argued that further negotiations with the government

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[1]Long to Selborne, 31 Mar. 1910, E.S.P., MS. Selborne 74/15-16.

[2]Memorandum by Long, 3 Mar. 1910, loc. cit.

were pointless. After more than three hours of discussion the meeting decided that the government's home rule proposals represented an insurmountable barrier to a continued dialogue.[1] Later that day Balfour told the government that the Conservatives could continue only on the understanding that home rule and other major constitutional changes would be placed beyond the increased powers of the Commons. In other words, the Unionists were prepared to surrender their built-in majority veto in the upper House on all issues save Irish home rule. Asquith refused the offer - a very considerable concession from the Conservatives' point of view - and the constitutional conference broke up on 10 November after twenty-two sittings.[2]

When Long failed to convince his colleagues that the Conservatives should produce their own scheme he argued, reluctantly, for acceptance of the Parliament Bill. The two electoral defeats of 1910 convinced him that the party could not win on the issue, therefore it was senseless to fight a losing battle. Once again, he was thinking of Ireland. Calculating that the government would win anyway, Long considered home rule by far the greater evil. If there was a third dissolution the Liberals would get another five years. Either way, the

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[1]Austen Chamberlain, Politics from Inside (London, 1936), p. 295.

[2]For a discussion of the reasons behind the break-up of the conference see Corinne Comstock Weston, 'The Liberal leadership and the Lords' veto, 1907-10', Historical Journal 11 (1968).

government would have complete command for a minimum of four years - ample time in which to pass home rule. On the other hand, if the Parliament Bill passed, the government could be expected to produce its Home Rule Bill early in the next session. Long then expected a swift reaction against the Liberals, a reaction which the Conservatives could use to unseat the government within the two years allowed by the Lords' suspensory veto. This reasoning had the advantage that at least it gave the party a chance and time, whereas to persist in the struggle against the Parliament Bill meant sure defeat and overwhelming humiliation.

Whilst there was even the slightest chance that the Bill might be defeated, Long urged opposition. As soon as it became clear that the Liberals would invoke the powers of the monarch if necessary he argued strongly for acceptance. Rumours that Asquith had obtained the King's assent to a massive creation of peers compounded Long's fears: home rule was becoming a real possibility. Although doubting the wisdom of continued resistance, he stuck to the official party line until well into the summer. When, for example, Lord Willoughby de Broke organised a luncheon party at the end of May with the intention of destroying the as yet inchoate movement in favour of acquiescence, Long delivered a bitter speech against the Bill, 'emphatic in his advice to fight the iniquitous measure to the bitter end.'[1] But from mid-June

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[1]Lord Willoughby de Broke, The Passing Years (London, 1924), p. 281.

onwards he fought hard for acceptance, a fact which understandably invited charges of treachery from those who refused to acknowledge the futility of continuing a fight which had already been lost. For Long, the Parliament Bill had become an ineluctable fact of political life.

Long played a major role in persuading Lansdowne to advise the Tory peers to acquiesce. On 22 June 1911 he laid his case, in strictest confidence, before Lansdowne and in the following weeks he badgered Lansdowne endlessly on the theme of the idiocy of the 'last-ditch stand.'[1] On 2 July J.L. Garvin began an attack in The Observer on the policy of surrender, and a week later the campaign culminated in an open attack not just on the policy of conciliation but on the party leaders themselves.[2] As an adherent of the 'diehard' faction, Austen Chamberlain was, of course, excluded from the trenchant ferocity of Garvin's prose. Not surprisingly, Long was extremely angry, regarding Garvin's attitude as reckless and foolhardy. He decided to intervene with a direct appeal to Waldorf Astor to have the tone of Garvin's leading articles altered, an appeal which prompted Garvin to ask Jack Sandars bluntly of the extent to which Long was influencing the Unionist press. Sandars

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[1]Long's papers contain letters and memoranda on this subject, all written in strictest confidence, to Lansdowne dated 22 June, 9 July, 18 July, 30 July and 2 Aug. 1911, W.L.P., WRO 947/448/7.

[2]See The Observer, 9 July 1911.

would give no answer, thereby implying that Balfour fully approved of Long's efforts to silence their most vociferous critic. This incident led Garvin to take up an attitude of implacable hostility towards Long and his next article was quite clearly intended to encourage a rebellion against the Unionist leadership. The campaign begun in The Observer on 2 July was the first public manifestation of the movement which was soon to be known as 'Balfour Must Go.'[1] Needless to say, Garvin's old admiration for Long was quite forgotten and he became a keen supporter of Chamberlain in the leadership contest in November. From the summer of 1911 onwards Long always resented the influence which Garvin enjoyed in Conservative circles.[2]

Lansdowne was at first reluctant to heed Long's advice, telling him on 12 July that whilst he hoped to avoid any actual creation of peers he preferred for the moment to continue 'to send down our amendments.'[3] Even as late as

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[1]This account of Garvin's attitude is based on Gollin, "Observer" and Garvin, pp. 332-7, although Professor Gollin wrongly claims that Long abruptly abandoned the 'no surrender' camp in July 1911. In fact, he had been unhappy about continued resistance for some months and he had certainly made up his mind to stand out for acceptance by mid-June. His first letter to Lansdowne advising acquiescence was written on 22 June and on 17 June Long had written to Sir William Bull: 'Creation of Peers or an Election means I believe the passing of H.R., one man one vote, State land Bill, Welsh Church & half a dozen other things & in 1916 where shall we be?... once H.R. Bill is out we can fight Gov. & I believe in two years bring them to their knees.' Long to Bull, 17 June 1911, Bu.P., 4/3

[2]See, for example, Long to Lady Londonderry, 7 June 1912, L.L.P., D/Lo/C 666(205)., in which Long complained that Garvin 'is not trusted by the best men in our Party.'

[3]Lansdowne to Long, 12 July 1911, W.L.P., WRO 947/448/7.

May Lansdowne had hoped that the government might be persuaded to drop their Bill in return for the Lords' participation in their own reform. On 8 May Lansdowne had introduced a Reform Bill into the upper House - precisely the kind of measure which Long had advocated over a year earlier.[1] But by now it was too late, and the Bill was a non-starter owing to the government's announcement that the Parliament Bill would stand and would apply to any upper House, whether reformed or not.

At the end of July Lansdowne denied emphatically that he was contemplating surrender,[2] but, gradually, his tune changed. Long meanwhile ostentatiously dissociated himself from the 'diehards', regarding the existence of a committee of opposition under Lord Halsbury as a divisive nuisance.[3] He discussed the question with

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[1] For a discussion of Lansdowne's Bill see M.S. Campisano, 'The Unionists and the Constitution, 1906-11', Oxford, B.Litt., 1977, pp. 129-31. The Bill proposed a House of about 350 members: 100 would be chosen by the hereditary peers from amongst themselves, but to be eligible for selection each candidate would have to have held some responsible office of state; 120 would be elected by an electoral college of MPs voting on a regional basis; 100 would be chosen by the government of the day, in proportion to party representation in the Commons; and there would be 16 law lords and 7 spiritual peers.

[2] Lansdowne to Long, 28 July 1911, W.L.P., WRO 947/448/7.

[3] Long recognised only too well that the 'diehard' campaign was more than just a last-ditch stand against the Parliament Bill. It was a direct challenge to the leadership. As St. Loe Strachey of The Spectator observed on 1 August: 'The struggle is whether the will of Lansdowne and Balfour is to prevail or the will of Austen Chamberlain.... If in the long run the will of Austen Chamberlain and F.E. Smith prevails and prevails in a way which will strike the public imagination, Lansdowne and Balfour ... will virtually be deposed.... The Chamberlain tradition ... is that you must give no quarter in politics, and that the spoils are to the victors, and these tactics will very soon be put into operation.' St. Loe Strachey to Curzon, 1 Aug. 1911, C.P., MSS. Eur. F. 112/89/59-61.

numerous party supporters, both in and out of parliament, and wrote to many leading Conservative peers to express his views. His influence in persuading the Lords to follow Lansdowne's advice and abstain in the vote for the Bill was considerable. Lord Curzon was the only other leading Unionist figure to put so much effort into persuading the party to take the pragmatic course of judicious surrender.[1] Necessity demanded that tactics be placed before principle.

The Parliament Bill brought Chamberlain and Long once again into conflict, for Chamberlain steadfastly refused to abandon all-out resistance. In a speech in August Long made an indirect attack on Chamberlain by saying that the behaviour of the Halsbury Club was both misguided

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[1] Curzon did more than any other peer to support Lansdowne. He organised letters and telegrams to ascertain voting intentions and personally canvassed all the doubtfuls. At the height of the crisis a small committee met at his house everyday, with Lansdowne in constant attendance, and when the vote on 10 August went against the 'diehards' Curzon naturally came in for a good deal of abuse from those who could see the policy of acquiescence only in terms of betrayal. Recent research indicates, however, that it was Lord Newton, and not Curzon, who persuaded a sufficient number of Tory peers to vote with the government to enable the Bill to pass. It would also appear that Lansdowne, despite his assertions that he wanted Conservative peers to abstain, rather than lend support to the Bill, both encouraged and approved of Newton's efforts to recruit 'a covert band of Unionist peers to vote for the government.' Curzon himself did not vote for the Bill, but abstained, as did Newton, although successfully persuading over twenty of his colleagues to vote with the government. Technically, therefore, it was neither Lansdowne nor Curzon who took the decisive step to avoid a mass creation of peers, but Lord Newton, 'a then little-known and now largely forgotten Conservative peer.' Without Newton's help the efforts of Lansdowne, Curzon, Balfour and Long might have come to nothing. See David Southern, 'Lord Newton, the Conservative Peers and the Parliament Act of 1911', English Historical Review 96 (1981).

and offensive.[1] Relations between the two men can only be described as mutually hostile, and in view of the forthcoming leadership contest, tainted as it was to be by intense animosity between the two principal contenders, Chamberlain's private comments on Long are of some interest: 'I expect he is jealous, but he is a queer mixture. He is hot-headed, often wrong in opinion, a bad counsellor ... and the nucleus around which grumblers gather.'[2] Long had much to grumble about: Chamberlain and the Halsbury Club threatened to split the party and leave it with no defence against a home rule Bill which was now inevitable. Chamberlain's insistence on tariff reform as the single burning issue of Unionist politics, coupled with his futile defence of a doomed principle, filled Long with horror.

It is curious that Long was so often accused of being a bad counsellor by his contemporaries, a charge frequently repeated by historians, although it has little basis in fact. For years he insisted that the party would never win an election whilst its programme included 'food taxes'. And he was right. He was equally right over the Parliament Bill. It was Chamberlain, paradoxically Long's accuser, who was the bad counsellor. It was always Chamberlain's weakness that he could never move with the political tide, as in his refusal to desert Lloyd George

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[1]Sir Charles Petrie, The Life and Letters of the Right Hon. Sir Austen Chamberlain, 2 Vols. (London, 1939), 1, 286-7.

[2]Quoted ibid., 1, 289.

in 1922. He displayed the same obduracy in 1911. To fight home rule the party had to be united, but Chamberlain, both by joining the 'diehards' and by refusing to compromise on tariff reform, was destroying its unity. To acquiesce in the Parliament Bill was at least to safeguard the Union for two years, during which time the government might fall out with the Nationalists or home rule be dropped for some other reason. Long's policy was sound, Chamberlain's politically inept.

Apart from home rule and the controversy over the Parliament Bill, Long involved himself in three major policy areas in the years immediately preceding Balfour's retirement as party leader. These were land reform, tariff reform and party organisation, and in each case his views were determined by the overriding desire to see a Conservative government in office. During 1910 he took up the question of land reform, advocating that there should be a rapid increase in the number of 'yeomen and peasant' proprietors. In 1905 he had opposed Jesse Collings's Land Purchase Bill. Now he changed his mind and argued that official party policy should embrace some scheme of state-assisted purchase. Again, his policy was one of classic Conservatism: he recognised that a system of land monopoly sustained by

a small number of landlords invited attack and it was therefore good sense to promote reform before the Liberals had time to implement their own legislation. Timely concessions were to be preferred to radical reform later on. He saw the creation of a large number of smallholdings by the Conservative party as the only effective way to challenge the appeal of Liberal social policy and he suggested that the provisions of the Wyndham Land Act should be made to apply throughout the whole of the United Kingdom.[1]

Long's advocacy of land purchase by state credit was not wholly disinterested: in 1910-11 he was selling a portion of his own estate and would undoubtedly have found matters much easier if the sitting tenants had had the kind of facilities which the state was already providing in Ireland. By the spring of 1911 Long had sold nearly four thousand acres of his Wiltshire estates, most of the land being purchased by existing tenants. It was in both his private and political interest to endorse land purchase. In 1905 it had not been, and in 1905 he had neither objected to the unfairness of a land policy which operated only in Ireland nor grasped Collings's proposals as an aegis with which to stem the rising tide of socialism. Long corresponded frequently with Collings on the subject and Balfour's reluctance to lend his support

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[1]Long's views on Unionist policy for land reform can be found in W.L.P., WRO 947/438.

to any definite plan contributed to the growing dissatisfaction within the party. Collings tried to use Long as the tool with which to gain acceptance for his schemes, a role which Long willingly took up in his desire to make the party attractive to the electorate. Collings frequently complained of the resentment against Balfour which was felt by party supporters with agricultural interests,[1] and Balfour's failure to endorse land reform as official Unionist policy intensified Long's frustration at the party's failure to win power in 1910.

But it was tariff reform which was Long's real bugbear; he worked hard to have 'food taxes' dropped. He was convinced that the party could oust the Liberal government once tariff reform had been abandoned as a major policy issue, and his hostility to Austen Chamberlain had much to do with his belief that Chamberlain was responsible for keeping the party in opposition. On 27 May 1910 Long observed to Lady Londonderry that 'the Conservative Party as a separate political unit is being slowly bled to death - the state of things is very serious - the discontent immense.'[2] The electoral defeat of January had reinforced his opinions and for the remainder of the year he made no secret of his view that 'food taxes' must be put into cold storage.

On 29 November 1910 Long took the chair at a meeting

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[1]See Collings to Long, 2 Apr., 8 Apr., 8 July, 22 July, and 7 Sept. 1910, ibid.

[2]Long to Lady Londonderry, 27 May 1910, L.L.P., D/Lo/C 666(120).

at the Albert Hall. The meeting had been called to announce a kind of half-way house, a policy which Long could support but which the tariff reformers could not reject. He opened the proceedings with pious declarations of party loyalty, declaiming with assured disingenuousness that Balfour had behind him 'a party absolutely united, confident and enthusiastic.'[1] Balfour then announced that 'I have not the least objection to submitting the principles of Tariff Reform to the Referendum.'[2] The 'quid pro quo' was to be the application of the same test to home rule.[3] The announcement was a clear victory for Long, despite the fact that he later made a fuss at

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[1] The Times, 30 Nov. 1910.

[2] Ibid.

[3] It has been pointed out by Neal Blewett, The Peers, the Parties, the People, pp. 188 and 447, n. 88, that Balfour did not make his pledge contingent on a reciprocal pledge from the Liberals to submit home rule to a referendum. Those of Balfour's colleagues who believed that the party would never win a general election with tariff reform in its programme did not interpret the pledge as conditional and Long was not alone in seeing the speech as a rejection of the extreme position taken up by the tariff reform organisation based in Birmingham, the Chamberlain stronghold. As Neal Blewett has remarked, the notion of a conditional pledge 'amounted to little more than a debating trick, for the Liberals would never have agreed.' (Ibid., p. 186). Nevertheless, Balfour's speech was immediately interpreted not only as a rejection of the tariff reformers' position but as an invitation to the Liberals to submit home rule to a plebiscite, an interpretation which he did nothing to contradict or qualify, thus allowing Chamberlain to argue that Asquith's failure to respond rendered the pledge null and void. The different interpretations of this speech at which Long and Chamberlain arrived merely served to exacerbate the tensions within the party, the exact opposite of what Balfour had intended.

Balfour's failure to consult him in advance: it removed the stigma of 'food taxes' from the forthcoming election; it challenged the supremacy of Chamberlain and the tariff reformers; and it embarrassed the Liberals by raising the question of the extent to which home rule depended on popular sanction. The declaration had the added advantage that the tariff reformers could not condemn it in principle without accepting the accusation that they wished to foist policies on a recalcitrant electorate. Lord Ridley, chairman of the Tariff Reform League, acquiesced reluctantly, as did Chamberlain, whilst Bonar Law contented himself with saying that he could not remain in parliament if fiscal reform were to be dropped from Unionist policy. Long was naturally very pleased; but his pleasure was short-lived.[1]

When the Conservatives were defeated in December for the second time in the same year, Long became anxious that the referendum pledge would soon be forgotten. Within a month of the Albert Hall declaration he was again attacking Balfour's weak leadership, insisting that a referendum on tariff reform should become official party policy and that Balfour should stick to this line. Long commended J.L. Garvin's view that 'dissension upon any vital question and recantation upon the Referendum would be assuredly destructive',[2] and he was convinced, as were

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[1]See Long to Lord Atkinson, copy, 29 Dec. 1910, W.L.P., WRO 947/445/2, for an example of Long's insistence that referendum was by far the best way of dealing with tariff reform.

[2]The Observer, 18 Dec. 1910.

Lansdowne and Lord Derby,[1] that Balfour's pledge had enabled the party to hang on to many seats which otherwise would have been lost. Chamberlain, on the other hand, sent a memorandum to Balfour and Lansdowne on 9 December arguing that the referendum proposal had done the party no good whatsoever and should be promptly forgotten.[2] And he followed this up with the observation that the Albert Hall pledge had only enabled the party to gain 'half a dozen well-known names' at the cost of losing the 'chance of winning hundreds'.[3] Chamberlain refused to accept either that the pledge had improved the party's appeal during the election or that it had the support of all the leaders other than himself.

Long became very worried by that section of the party which, in the aftermath of the election, argued that the idea of a plebiscite should be dropped. On 19 December F.E. Smith asserted in The Times that tariff reform should not be subjected to 'an exceptional disability', an assertion which provoked Long into writing a strong memorandum to Balfour a few days later. 'The abandonment of Referendum as applied to a Tariff Bill,' he told his leader, 'would be disastrous, it would expose us to the charge that we had only produced the plan as an Election dodge, and I consider our honour would be involved.'[4] But

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[1]Lansdowne to Long, 19 Dec. 1910, W.L.P., WRO 947/445/8; Derby to Long, 4 Jan. 1911, W.L.P., WRO 947/445/10.

[2]Chamberlain to Lansdowne, copy, 9 Dec. 1910, and accompanying memorandum dated 5 Dec. 1910, A.C.P., AC 8/7/6.

[3]Chamberlain to Lansdowne, copy, 18 Dec. 1910, ibid.

[4]'Memorandum to Mr Balfour' by Long, 22 Dec. 1910, W.L.P., WRO 947/445/3.

there was more than just honour involved, as Long well knew. The referendum pledge had given him a victory over Chamberlain. Now the tariff reformers seemed to be gaining the upper hand again within the party. On Christmas Eve he reported: 'The revolt ... against Referendum for Tariffs is very strong and bitter, if A.J.B. and Lansdowne underestimate its importance and do nothing very great ... evils follow, they are active and determined, if we are apathetic and weak there can be but one result viz, a big split.'[1] And he tried hard to enlist Lansdowne's support to persuade Balfour to crush the revolt.[2]

It was all something of a vicious circle: a plebiscite on tariff reform presupposed a Conservative government in office, but the Conservatives would not succeed in winning power without first uniting on a basic policy to put before the electorate, and they could no more unite on a referendum for tariff reform than they could on tariff reform itself. Long did not see this and he felt badly let down when Balfour refused to endorse a referendum as party policy. For a while he seemed to have got the better of the tariff reformers, and it was not surprising that he became very bitter towards Balfour, especially as Chamberlain's views seemed to carry more weight than his own. He was particularly annoyed that Balfour had not

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[1]Long to Lady Londonderry, 24 Dec. 1910, L.L.P., D/Lo/C 666(137).

[2]Correspondence between Long and Lansdowne on this subject can be found in W.L.P., WRO 947/445/8.

consulted him in advance over the referendum pledge, but had sent a special messenger to Chamberlain in Scotland. On 21 January he confided to Lady Londonderry:

> A.J.B. ... told us that he was very sorry he had not been able to consult us about Referendum etc. but that he had sent a special message to Edinburgh to consult Austen! This is more than I can stand.... I am not jealous or over sensitive but I object to being humbugged or made a fool of.... I ... can think of nothing but the older, the happier and the better days.[1]

The referendum pledge, then, did nothing to satisfy Long or his followers. On the contrary, its initial promise served only to increase Long's annoyance when it was ultimately abandoned. By the beginning of 1911 he was a bitter critic of Balfour's leadership and an angry opponent of the Chamberlain faction.

In the wake of the two electoral defeats of 1910 there was much recrimination about the inadequacies of the party

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[1]Long to Lady Londonderry, 21 Jan. 1911, L.L.P., D/Lo/C 666(140). From this letter it would appear that despite taking the chair at the Albert Hall meeting Long had no idea in advance what Balfour was going to say. Balfour's letter to Chamberlain, sent by special messenger to Scotland, is dated 28 Nov. 1910 and can be found in A.C.P., AC 8/7/1. Balfour knew very well that Chamberlain could not possibly reply before the speech the following day, so that Long's annoyance was to some extent unfounded. Chamberlain was no more consulted in advance about the referendum pledge than Long himself, and Long seems to have been irritated simply that Chamberlain should be singled out for special treatment. Unknown to Long, Balfour twice apologised to Chamberlain that the letter of 28 Nov. came so late. See Balfour to Chamberlain, 30 Nov. and 13 Dec. 1910, A.C.P., AC 8/7/3 and 8/7/4 respectively.

organisation, so much so that Balfour was unable to beat off the demands for reform, and the appointment of a Unionist Organisation Committee (U.O.C.) was announced on 1 February. Long played a major role in forcing Balfour to concede that reform was essential. He had been vexed over the party's organisation in the Commons for some time. In March 1910, for example, he had described the situation to Lord Selborne:

> Arthur is away ... but he has left nobody in charge. ... Result is confusion and doubt, unnecessary and avoidable difficulties for us, & great opportunities for jeers and gibes on the part of the enemy, all of which spoils our fighting power and tends to dispirit our men.... I need not tell you I have no personal feeling, if A. had put Austen as Ex-Chancellor in command I would have gladly served under him ... but as things are there is chaos in the House while outside A. Hood and Jack Sandars do exactly as they like. It is demoralising and heart-breaking.[1]

The chairmanship of the U.O.C. was given to Aretas Akers-Douglas, although Long had asked Balfour for the job on 29 December 1910.[2]

It was possibly because Long made such a nuisance of himself that Balfour gave the job to somebody else. Almost as soon as the election results were in, Long began to

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[1] Long to Selborne, dated merely March 1910, E.S.P., MS. Selborne 74/17-24.

[2] Long to Balfour, copy, 29 Dec. 1910, W.L.P., WRO 947/449/4. Long also wanted Hayes-Fisher appointed Chief Whip, having a week earlier described the party organisation to Balfour as 'either non-existent or deplorable'. See memorandum by Long, 22 Dec. 1910, S.P., MS. Eng. Hist. c.762, fos. 196-7.

orchestrate demands for organisational reform. On 3 January he forwarded to Balfour a petition from the 1900 Club deploring the party's organisation and demanding a committee,[1] and ten days later he attacked Balfour for failing to consult his senior colleagues frequently enough.[2] He deprecated the habit of allowing Acland-Hood, the Chief Whip, and Jack Sandars to organise Commons business, and complained to Balfour that 'I was treated with far more confidence by you when I was only an ex-Under Secretary than I have been during the years ... since ... 1906.'[3]

The U.O.C. presented its report in June 1911;[4] Long served on the committee but he signed the report with some reluctance. This was for two reasons: he wanted the Conservative and Liberal Unionist organisations amalgamated immediately, not at some future date, and he wanted Balfour to promise, in advance of formal submission of the report, to follow the committee's recommendations.

The appointment of Arthur Steel-Maitland as party chairman, also in June 1911, confirmed Balfour's indifference to Long's opinions. Steel-Maitland sat for a Birmingham constituency and was acceptable to Chamberlain - a fact which almost guaranteed Long's hostility. On 1 June Long had written to Balfour in the strongest terms to advise against the appointment. His main objections were

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[1] Long to Balfour, copy, 3 Jan. 1911, W.L.P., WRO 947/449/4.

[2] Memorandum by Long to Balfour, 13 Jan. 1911, ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Report of the Unionist Organisation Committee, June 1911, W.L.P., WRO 947/450/16.

that Steel-Maitland was too junior and too much tainted by the Birmingham faction; and he pointed out that to give Steel-Maitland, who had been in the House for less than two years, the equivalent of cabinet rank would be bitterly resented by 'the older members.'[1] Certainly, Long bitterly resented it. Anticipating trouble, Balfour only informed Long of the appointment just as he was about to catch a train for the West Country, thus denying him the chance of mounting any serious opposition. The appointment went ahead; Long gave in without a fuss, although privately he was furious:

> You know this last affair of A.J.B.'s is past all bearing: we never intended that the 'Party Manager' should be of Cabinet rank.... I have come to the end of my tether.... I believe he really wants to destroy the Conservative Party and hand us over tied and bound to Austen, this I won't stand.... I don't want to make a split, or cause trouble, but I can't and won't follow a man who is capable of such conduct towards his friends.[2]

He was also disgruntled at the way the party's parliamentary opposition continued to be organised. Replying to Lord Balcarres, who had taken over as chief whip and who on 5 July had asked, at short notice, that Long take charge of opposing the Insurance Bill, he made his

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[1]Long to Balfour, 1 June 1911, S.P., MS. Eng. Hist. c.763, fos. 85-9.

[2]Long to Lady Londonderry, 16 June 1911, L.L.P., D/Lo/C 666(145).

dissatisfaction plain:

> I feel bound to tell you that ... this arrangement is most unsatisfactory ... there is a limit to everything! I am convinced that if we are to go on in the same happy go lucky fashion nothing but disaster can follow.... No notice, no proper division amongst different Front Bench men ... but a haphazard arrangement.... I really must point out ... because right is right and business is business, that I am next to Balfour, the senior Privy Councillor on our Bench, and ... by many years his oldest colleague, and ... it is not a businesslike plan to ask me to be ready at any personal sacrifice ... whenever it is not convenient for Chamberlain to be there.[1]

The tone of these letters speaks for itself: Long was thoroughly fed up with party organisation both in and out of the House. Time and time again he found his views ignored; Balfour had out-manoeuvred him over the appointment of Steel-Maitland; and nothing was being done to keep the Liberal Unionists in check.

Eventually, of course, organisational reforms were implemented, but they were too late to do Long any good. Long's work for the U.O.C. bore fruit under Bonar Law, not under Balfour as he had hoped, and it did nothing to assist his own bid for the leadership by undermining the Chamberlain stranglehold on the party organisation. Ever since 1906 the tariff reformers had exercised an increasing control over the constituency organisations

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[1]Long to Balcarres, copy, 6 July 1911, W.L.P., WRO 947/449/59.

and the National Union, so much so that George Bowles, Lord Robert Cecil, J. Rutherford, F.W. Lambton and T.H. Sloan - all prominent free-fooders - had been unseated by the first election of 1910. By trying to reform the party's organisation, therefore, Long was taking a stand against the tariff reformers who had in only five years made a not unsuccessful attempt to ally the party's organisational structure, at both national and regional levels, with their cause.[1]

Long has acquired the reputation of being a petulant, irascible man to work with, a constant irritation to Balfour in his last years as party leader. Certainly, Long could be outspoken, even rude, as his letters show, but there was considerable justification for his outbursts. When he complained that 'really we know no more than do the outsiders'[2] he had a point. To Long, it looked as if he and his followers were always expected to give in out of loyalty to the leader, whilst Chamberlain and the tariff reformers invariably had their own way. And Long was, as he pointed out to Balcarres, Balfour's most senior colleague. He naturally expected to be consulted and considered, and he was naturally annoyed when he was ignored or deceived. Balfour invited some of Long's sharper attacks by deferring too often, and

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[1] A full account of this process is given in Blewett, 'Free Fooders, Balfourites, Whole Hoggers'; a good summary of party organisation in this period can be found in John Ramsden, The Age of Balfour and Baldwin, 1902-40 (New York, 1978), pp. 45-62, 68-72.

[2] Long to Balfour, 20 Jan. 1911, B.P., Add. MS. 49777; Long's copy is dated 21 Jan. 1911, W.L.P., WRO 947/449/4.

without any attempt at explanation, to what Long called 'the Birmingham gang'.

Walter Long was not a particularly ambitious politician, but by the summer of 1911 he had determined to make a bid for the leadership of the Conservative party. This was brought about more by anger at Chamberlain's activities and frustration at Balfour's failure to lead with authority than by any driving ambition on his own part. Fortune seemed to favour him as the natural candidate, if only because there was no-one else. Balfour would clearly go soon: Chamberlain was a Liberal Unionist and unpopular with a large section of the party; Bonar Law seemed an unlikely contender; Carson had no following outside Ireland; F.E. Smith was too clever by half; and Alfred Lyttelton was always better at cricket than politics. It was not unreasonable, therefore, for Long to regard himself as the party's next leader in the Commons. He was certainly regarded as such by a large body of MPs. If Long had been more ambitious he would have challenged Balfour earlier, instead of waiting for Balfour to decide the timing of his own departure. As it was, it took three electoral defeats, the chasing out of the free traders, and Chamberlain's obdurate resistance to the Parliament Bill to persuade Long that, as Leo Maxse of

the National Review put it, 'Balfour Must Go'.

Dissatisfaction with Balfour's leadership had begun years earlier, but it was accelerated and intensified by the struggle over the Parliament Bill. At the end of July 1911 Long pressed Balfour 'earnestly to mark his disapproval [of the 'diehard' campaign] ... by a public statement declaring the lead of the opposition in the House of Commons in favour of Walter Long.'[1] Feelings against the party's two leaders - Balfour and Lansdowne - were running high and although Long had supported acquiescence in the Parliament Bill he somehow managed to avoid the stigma of defeat and to dissociate himself from the leadership. He did nothing to appear publicly to oppose Balfour and he refused to be goaded into a precipitate attempt to unseat his leader, preferring to allow persistent criticism to force Balfour's hand. Even at this late stage Long would have supported Balfour if he had chosen to take a firm stand against his detractors. Long's criticism was always that Balfour's leadership was effete and vacillating instead of assertive and decisive. As he told Lord St. Aldwyn on 2 August: 'I am urging A.J.B. to take prompt and decisive action, ... we are doing nothing and A.J.B.'s followers will drift away from

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[1] J.S. Sandars, 'A diary of the events and transactions in connection with the passage of the Parliament Bill of 1911 through the house of Lords', B.P., Add. MS. 49767; Peter Fraser, 'The Unionist Débâcle of 1911 and Balfour's Retirement', Journal of Modern History 35 (1963), p. 358.

him if prompt steps are not taken.'[1] Balfour's failure to take decisive action was always at the heart of Long's criticisms. The groundswell of opinion against Balfour inevitably became an important ingredient in his own bid for the leader's place. As his friend Sir Harry Samuel put it; 'there seems ... to be a call both for a strong leader and a strong policy and you seem ... to be the only man who can secure both.'[2]

At the end of September Long increased the pressure on Balfour by sending him what Jack Sandars later described as an 'impertinent letter' demanding a 'radical change in policy' without which 'Mr Balfour's leadership would be a disaster to himself and the party as a whole....'[3] Balfour felt Long's criticisms keenly, a fact which no doubt influenced him in favour of Chamberlain, and he observed to Balcarres that Long had in effect issued 'a bold and brutal invitation to retire.'[4] It is therefore not surprising that Balfour thought that the leadership should go to Chamberlain in the Commons, Curzon in the Lords, remarking that Long was 'too discursive, too quick-tempered, too changeable, and too complimentary. The compliments which he pays to his opponents are the only features of his speeches I ever recall.'[5] But Balfour had

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[1]Long to St. Aldwyn, copy, 2 Aug. 1911, W.L.P., WRO 947/448/29.

[2]Samuel to Long, 11 Sept. 1911, ibid., 448/37.

[3]J.S. Sandars, 'A note on the events leading to Mr. Balfour's resignation', B.P., Add. MS. 49767; Fraser, op. cit., p. 361.

[4]Blanche E.C. Dugdale, Arthur James Balfour, 2 Vols. (London, 1936), 2, 88.

[5]Ibid., 2, 87.

cause to remember rather more than just Long's complaints, for his complaints managed to combine vague threats with protestations of loyalty, a curious compound of pleadings, demands, suggestions, helpful advice and rudeness. The letter which Sandars regarded as impertinent contained all these elements and ran to eight pages: 'It is quite true that you are Leader and, on the principle of "j'y suis, j'y reste" you can retain the position; but this would surely involve disaster to the Party, and ... to the country.'[1]

Long's main worry was that the revolt against Balfour would place Chamberlain, who he regarded as lacking in judgement and sense, in power. As he told Lady Londonderry on 3 October: 'There will be a revolt and A.C.'s friends will win. I should not care, should indeed be very glad

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[1]Long to Balfour, copy, 29 Sept. 1911, L.P., Add. MS. 62403. The original of this letter, interestingly, is not amongst Balfour's papers but amongst those of Jack Sandars and can be found in S.P., MS. Eng. Hist. c. 764, fos. 128-37. Sandars was even more annoyed by the letter than Balfour, copying out extracts in his own hand and noting after three weeks that it was 'even more offensive' on reading it again.' See ibid. fos. 113-6, 126-7. Sandars showed either the full letter or extracts edited by himself to selected colleagues as an example of Long's perfidy. Viscount Chilston (Akers-Douglas) remarked, 'I cannot think how the writer could have sent it. It is brutal and cruel and I join with you in saying I can never forget or forgive it.' Chilston to Sandars, 14 Nov. 1911, ibid. fos. 140-1. Long was well aware that the letter gave offence and he evidently felt some remorse, for in Jan. 1913 he apologised to Balfour: 'I know I am guilty', Long wrote, 'of an unpardonable act in saying what I did during those difficult times in 1911.... As long as I live I shall profoundly regret that I failed my leader at a most critical moment.' This letter, dated 20 Jan. 1913, can be found in B.P., Add. MS. 49777. Lord Balcarres was convinced that Long's letter played an important part in encouraging Balfour to resign. In Balcarres's words it 'confirmed and amplified his deductions more than anything else put together.' Memorandum by Balcarres, 2 Oct. 1911, John Vincent, ed., The Crawford Papers: The Journals of David Lindsay, twenty-seventh Earl of Crawford and tenth Earl of Balcarres, 1871-1940, during the years 1892 to 1940 (to be published by Manchester University Press, 1984), p. 228.

if I thought he would do the job, but he couldn't, of this I am sure. No judgement, no prevision, e.g. Parliament Bill.'[1] By the middle of the month Long was very worried. With the rumour of Balfour's impending resignation and, more ominously, of Chamberlain's likely succession, he tried to get Balfour to issue a public denial.[2] A few days later he was adamant that he would fight Chamberlain, reporting on 21 October that 'neither Carson nor I have any idea of standing down.'[3] Chamberlain, too, was worried, as he did not regard the autumn of 1911 as a propitious moment to choose a new leader, and he tried to ignore the 'Balfour Must Go' movement by pretending that it was solely Long's 'most offensive defences' of the leader which deceived people into believing that there was any real feeling against Balfour.[4]

Just as Long and his followers were vehemently opposed to Chamberlain because they believed that he lacked the qualities of a leader, so the Chamberlain camp were hostile to Long on the grounds that he could not do the job properly. Neither side had any respect for the capacities of the other; both believed that their man alone was suitable.[5] The opinion of

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[1]Long to Lady Londonderry, 3 Oct. 1911, L.L.P., D/Lo/C 666(165).

[2]Long to Balfour, copies, 18 Oct., 19 Oct. 1911, L.P., Add. MS. 62403.

[3]Long to Lady Londonderry, 21 Oct. 1911, L.L.P., D/Lo/C 666(163).

[4]Chamberlain, Politics from Inside, p. 362.

[5]Balcarres recorded in his diary on 25 Oct. 1911: '... for my part I can only look to Austen Chamberlain. Walter Long is hopeless, impossible.... Bonar Law won't do.... Wyndham is too flighty, Alfred Lyttelton too sentimental, F.E. Smith too inexperienced, Harry Chaplin fifty years too old - and so forth.' The Crawford Papers, p. 237.

Alfred Lyttelton, expressed to Chamberlain in a conversation which the latter duly recorded, was widely shared by Long's enemies:

> Walter Long couldn't do it, it would kill him. We all know Walter's good qualities and "if he could always have three drives off the tee, he might do very well, for his third shot was generally a good one, but the first two went here and there and all over the place".[1]

Even before Chamberlain knew that Balfour's impending resignation was more than a rumour, he was making it plain to other leading party figures that he had no intention of ever serving under Long. He told Lyttelton that he would never defer to Long's opinions as he had on so many occasions to Balfour's.[2] This was, in effect, a clear statement from Chamberlain that Long's elevation to the leadership would split the party. It gave Long little chance of success. Chamberlain was unusually percipient in realising early on that Bonar Law was a serious candidate, a fact which might lead to the frustration of his own chances but which could be used to guarantee Long's failure. On 5 November Chamberlain wrote:

> I cannot find that there is anyone in our councils who thinks that Long himself will do, but he will throw all his weight into the scale against me and might get Bonar Law chosen. Sandars says that he and

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[1] Chamberlain, Politics from Inside, p. 372.
[2] Ibid., pp. 372-3.

> Balcarres had never supposed that Law would allow his name to be put forward. I think they are mistaken and that Law would allow it and like it if he thought there was a chance of his being chosen.[1]

Relations between Long and Chamberlain had now reached their nadir, but Chamberlain's account of Long's behaviour, written in the midst of what he later called a crisis in his political fortunes, was inevitably distorted by disappointment at his own failure, a fact which he later admitted freely.[2]

Lord Derby made the somewhat foolish suggestion that Balfour should appoint a second-in-command in lieu of resigning, as if this would somehow heal the breach between the two factions.[3] Balcarres was meanwhile busy trying to fix matters well in advance of Balfour's announcement, but he found Long decidedly unhelpful, reporting to Sandars late on 7 November: 'I telephoned to Walter Long, suggesting that ... Shadow Cabinet MPs sh^{d} meet tomorrow evening at 5 to consider procedure & issue instructions. I was met by a resolute 'non possumus' '.[4] Chamberlain made it clear to his rival that he envisaged that neither of them would emerge triumphant. He told Long bluntly: 'If we divide the

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[1]Ibid., pp. 380-1. [2]Ibid., pp. 381-2.

[3]Derby to Balfour, 5 Nov. 1911, quoted Randolph S. Churchill, Lord Derby, King of Lancashire (London, 1959), pp. 151-2.

[4]Note from Balcarres to Sandars, 7 Nov. 1911, marked 11.30 p.m., S.P., MS. Eng. Hist. c.764, fo. 152.

Party too equally, I think that very possibly it will be felt that your friends and mine will more easily unite in support of some third person than accept either of us by a narrow margin of votes.'[1] The feeling in the Commons had definitely moved against Balfour. As Sir William Bull had noticed in the summer:

> Balfour is by far and away the most brilliant debater and Parliamentarian in the House of Commons. He towers over Asquith, Lloyd George and everybody else but he is the worst leader we ever had and he is getting worse.... He lets Jack Sandars ... keep people from him and rule in his place.
>
> ... He does not lead. He is like a sleepy lion who has to be poked up to roar occasionally.
>
> There is a growing feeling that though Walter Long has none of his brilliancy he would make a better leader.[2]

Discussing the matter of the succession with Balcarres, Chamberlain 'snorted' at the 'idea of Long's loyalty who ... had been the centre of every coterie of grumblers for the last five years.'[3] Chamberlain made no bones about his opinions: 'I had no confidence in Long's judgement and shared the opinion ... that Long's leadership would be a brief but disastrous fiasco.'[4] Long's opinion of Chamberlain's abilities was exactly

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[1] Chamberlain, Politics from Inside, p. 385.
[2] Bull's diary, 16 July 1911, Bu.P., 4/4.
[3] Chamberlain, Politics from Inside, p. 387.
[4] Ibid., p. 388.

the same.

On 8 November Balfour announced his intention to resign. The consolidation of the Halsbury Club, stubbornly resentful over its defeat on the Parliament Bill, and the 'Balfour Must Go' campaign mounted by Leo Maxse had confirmed Balfour's intention to step down. Bull had already been busy on Long's behalf, having reached the conclusion that the contest would be extremely close:

> Gerald Arbuthnot [Long's private secretary] rang me up last night and today I saw him. Balfour is going to resign this afternoon.... We are going to run Walter Long. We ran through a list of his friends & Austen Chamberlain's friends:- (a) Staunch (b) Doubtful (c) Neutral - Curiously enough each class is very level. The Neutrals could carry either way.[1]

Although Long had known that Balfour's departure could not be far off he had gone through the motions of appearing loyal to Balfour up until the very last moment. Just the week before he had taken part in organising a meeting to discuss the best way of strengthening Balfour's position.[2] It was also on 8 November that Long was rude to Chamberlain as the two men arrived simultaneously at the House. So worried was J.L. Garvin that Bonar Law's candidature would play into Long's hands that he spent

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[1]Bull's diary, 8 Nov. 1911, Bu.P., 4/4.

[2]Petrie, Austen Chamberlain, 1, 296.

two hours late that evening trying unsuccessfully to persuade Bonar Law to stand down.[1] Balcarres, too, was worried, for there was strong feeling in the party in favour of deciding the issue by secret ballot, and he calculated that if such a procedure was to be adopted Long would emerge the winner.[2] On the following day, Thursday 9 November, Balcarres was alarmed to find that 'the lobbying for W.L. is terrific.... Bonar Law is determined to stand, Carson not to stand.'[3]

Long now wrote an 'insurance' letter to Chamberlain, refuting some of the statements attributed to him and offering to serve loyally if Chamberlain won the contest.[4] As Chamberlain subsequently pointed out, Long did not post the letter until after he had heard Chamberlain's suggestion that both men should stand down. Long could hardly allow it to be said that he had refused in advance to accept whatever decision the party might arrive at.

In his autobiography Long claimed the initiative in suggesting the withdrawal of the two major candidates,[5] and his biographer, Sir Charles Petrie, simply followed this account,[6] with Long solemnly declaring to his guests

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[1]Garvin to Chamberlain, dated merely Thursday (i.e. 9 Nov. 1911), A.C.P., AC 9/4/24.

[2]Balcarres to Sandars, 8 Nov. 1911, S.P., MS. Eng. Hist. c.764, fos. 153-4.

[3]Note by Balcarres, 9 Nov. 1911, ibid., fo. 175.

[4]This letter is quoted in Chamberlain, Politics from Inside, p. 397. The original can be found in A.C.P., AC 9/4/35. It is dated 9 Nov. 1911, and scrawled across the top of it, in Long's hand, are the words 'Written last night but omitted to post it.'

[5]Memories, pp. 189-92.

[6]Sir Charles Petrie, Walter Long and His Times (London, 1936), p. 172.

at his London house, 'I have determined to retire if Chamberlain will do so also, and then Bonar Law can be unanimously elected as leader of the Unionist Party.' Long then supposedly turned to Sir Harry Samuel with the peremptory command, 'Harry, you've got to see to this for me.' To which the dutiful Sir Harry replied, 'I'll be damned if I will.' This colourful account is, of course, pure fiction, for it was Chamberlain who suggested that both men should withdraw.[1] Long agreed, reluctantly, and half expecting a trick: 'I have had an awful 4 days ... I may have been deceived. There may yet be a row. All this is possible.'[2]

When he wrote to Chamberlain on 9 November offering to serve under him, Long knew full well that neither man was to be the next leader. He agreed to stand down not only as a means to avoid splitting the party, but because he believed he might have another chance within a matter of months. On 10 November he offered his support to Bonar Law: 'I am thankful you have consented to stand. ... Remember it is not a fight between individuals ... and neither side will give way now, and after an election much soreness would remain.'[3] But there was also an

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[1]There are, however, two pieces of contemporary evidence to support Long's account in claiming the initiative. In a letter to Balfour, dated 19 Nov. 1911, Sir Harry Chaplin reported that the original suggestion to retire had come from Long. On the envelope of this letter Sandars scribbled the words 'A gross travesty of the facts'. See B.P., Add. MS. 49772. But Bull's diary entry for 10 Nov. 1911 contains the following sentence: 'Walter Long has told Austen if he stands down, he will - Austen has consented and the outsider romps home.' Bu.P., 4/4. As both men claimed the initiative in later years, the question must remain in some doubt.

[2]Long to Lady Londonderry, 10 Nov. 1911, L.L.P., D/Lo/C 666(171).

[3]Long to Bonar Law, 10 Nov. 1911, B.L.P., 24/1/3.

element of personal calculation in Long's withdrawal, as he confided to Lady Londonderry on 11 November: 'I have reliable information - if A.C. or I are elected we are to be broken in 6 months. Between you and me I believe this fate must overtake the first man. I don't want to be the one!'[1] In other words, Long thought Bonar Law might prove a caretaker who could last only a few months, by which time the party would be prepared to unite behind one of the principal contenders. There was a certain plausibility in this: Bonar Law hardly looked in November 1911 like a man who could unite the warring factions and maintain his own leadership for some twelve years. Quite simply, Long underrated Bonar Law's chances and believed that in the end the party would have to choose either himself or Chamberlain.

Long's support was impressive: he could count on the Irish Unionists, a large group of backbenchers and whatever influence Londonderry House might bring to bear. The 1900 Club supported him and there was strong backbench feeling against Chamberlain, mainly on the grounds of his disloyalty to Balfour over the Parliament Bill. Long's principal supporters included Sir William Bull, Sir Harry Samuel, Charles Bathurst, Ian Malcolm, Lord Helmsley and Lord Charles Beresford. But Chamberlain had the support of the party managers, especially Balcarres, as well as

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[1]Long to Lady Londonderry, 11 Nov. 1911, L.L.P., D/Lo/C 666(172).

that of the tariff reformers and the Halsbury Club. Robert Sanders recorded:

> Bal. himself was much against Walter Long & more or less against Bonar Law. He expressed the opinion that Bonar Law was lazy and not forthcoming enough. Walter Long was very angry because he said the Whips' room was working against him and that Pike [Pease] was saying that Long's health would not stand the strain.[1]

Bull noted on 9 November that 'Long is clearly more of a favourite than Austen although the latter has all the Whips behind him.'[2]

The candidature of Bonar Law looked at first like a fillip to Long's chances, for few of Long's supporters would go readily into the Bonar Law camp whilst many of Chamberlain's would. This fear was expressed directly to Bonar Law in the hope that he could be persuaded to withdraw, which he nearly did.[3] Chamberlain's decision to withdraw on condition that Long did likewise is understandable: it was better to have the tariff reformer and businessman Bonar Law than to risk Long. But why did Long agree? Was it simply that he believed that Bonar Law's leadership would be shortlived? His position, after all, looked strong.[4] If the contest was to be decided on a single ballot then he looked set to win; and if Law was

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[1] Sanders diary, 12 Nov. 1911.

[2] Bull's diary, 9 Nov. 1911, Bu.P., 4/4.

[3] Robert Blake, The Unknown Prime Minister (London, 1955), pp. 79-81.

[4] The betting in the Carlton Club before news of Long's decision to stand down had been six to four in Long's favour. Balcarres's Notes, 9 Nov. 1911, The Crawford Papers, p. 244.

to be defeated on a first vote, then Long would revert to the position as it had stood before Bonar Law's candidature. Was his concurrence in Chamberlain's plan therefore a political blunder? Long was aware that he could not command unanimous support, that he had made bitter enemies, and that his opponents would not allow mere loyalty to the leader to outbid policies to which they were firmly wedded. If Long had not concurred and had insisted on continuing the fight he ran the risk of being charged with splitting the party. For Long, Peel and 1846 was always the great blot on the party's history. He knew that Chamberlain could add fuel to the fires of discontent by making his offer public, thereby suggesting that Long had risked party unity for his own political career even when an honourable way out had been proposed. Long thus knew that he had no hope of being an effective leader, not because he necessarily lacked the capacity, but because Chamberlain would ensure that he was not given a chance. Long had no choice but to concur. The fact that he rated Bonar Law so poorly merely served to make the decision easier.

And so, the Carlton Club meeting of 13 November was fixed in advance. Long played his part well by describing Bonar Law as 'not only a great deal bigger in political stature than I am, but a man to whom we can look with absolute confidence.'[1] Long then proposed Bonar Law,

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[1]Transcript of the proceedings of the Carlton Club meeting of 13 Nov. 1911, W.L.P., WRO 947/451.

Chamberlain seconded the proposal, and Bonar Law was unanimously chosen. Discussion was ably stifled by Harry Chaplin acting as chairman for the occasion. Robert Sanders, who was present at the meeting, recorded a vivid account of the day's events in his diary:

> The Carlton Club meeting on Monday went off quite admirably. Harry Chaplin in the Chair a very great success.... Walter Long proposed Bonar Law. His speech was one of the best things I ever heard. Manly and rather touching. The country gentleman at his very best.... Austen followed.... When Austen sat down Chaplin suggested that he had better put the question at once & on getting an affirmative shout did so. A clear way of stifling discussion and few men could have done it better. Motion carried unanimously. Bonar Law then sent for. All got up to cheer him except Banbury who remained seated. His speech struck me as feeblest of the day.... It was ... a curious feature that while Walter Long was speaking of the decision almost as the Swan Song of the Country Gentleman, he and Chaplin ... cut far the finest figures in the proceedings.
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> At the House Bonar Law ... came into the Whips' Room in the course of the afternoon and seemed rather to be asking for orders from Austen. He struck me as rather shy and awkward.... The only dissentient note that I heard was one of regret that Austen had not retired in favour of Walter Long as being the older man. On the other hand I think the LU clique are a little sore.[1]

So ended Long's hopes of leading the Conservative party

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[1]Sanders diary, 15 Nov. 1911. Lord Balcarres, too, described Long's reception as 'tremendous' and recorded that he 'made the best speech of his life.' The Crawford Papers, pp. 249-50.

and possibly becoming prime minister. In the end he had proved a dependable party man. Unlike Peel and Gladstone before him, Lloyd George and MacDonald afterwards, each of whom split his respective party in the interests of, or despite, political ambitions, Long chose unity and conciliation. If it had come to a straight fight Long would probably have won, although his majority would clearly have been slender. His problem was that his support came from the mass of the party rather than from its leaders. Amongst the party as a whole he was much more popular than either Chamberlain or Bonar Law, although the canvass conducted by Long's most energetic supporters which concluded that he could expect to win by a majority of at least seventy[1] was decidedly over-optimistic. Nonetheless, opinion inside the party expected him to win, and the opinion of his younger brother, Colonel R.G.W. Chaloner, is by no means wholly inaccurate: 'If it had been fought out W would have won by a large majority (as one of A.C.'s leading supporters admitted to me afterwards).'[2]

And Edward Goulding, who assisted Max Aitken in the bid to push Bonar Law forward, was clearly of the opinion that Long would win in a straight fight. As J.L. Garvin had reported to Waldorf Astor on 10 November, Goulding

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[1]Petrie, Walter Long, p. 171.

[2]Chaloner to Charlotte Ethel Martin (Long's sister), 14 Nov. 1911, W.L.P., WRO 947/452. Colonel Chaloner was Long's half-brother. He dropped the surname Long and took Chaloner by royal licence in 1888. In 1917 he became Baron Gisborough.

'acknowledged that Long seemed to be developing strength enough to beat both Austen and Bonar. Walter's victory seemed certain.'[1] On the following day Goulding had sent Garvin a detailed analysis of the strength of the various factions, concluding that Long could count on a good majority. As a prominent backbencher, Goulding, Unionist MP for Worcester and a committed tariff reformer, was in a position to gauge the strenth of feeling in favour of Long. Although a firm supporter of Austen Chamberlain, he promoted Bonar Law precisely because he recognised that Chamberlain would not win in a straight fight. And it was for this reason that Garvin, already privy to the arrangement between Chamberlain and Long, did not carry an article in The Observer of 12 November strongly backing Chamberlain, as had been expected, but discoursed at length on the necessity for unity under Bonar Law. Sir William Bull, who conducted the canvass on Long's behalf, remained convinced that Long would have won easily in a two-cornered fight. The temptation of office seems to have been employed to bring Bull into line behind Bonar Law. At the end of 1911 Bull wrote:

> I backed Walter Long for the leadership. He would have beaten Austen Chamberlain by 2 to 1 if it had come to a fight but I am glad Bonar has got it, he is better than both the others. Goulding - the intriguer who put him there - says he must have a chat with me as

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[1]Garvin to Astor, 10 Nov. 1911, quoted Gollin, "Observer" and Garvin, p. 359.

he thinks I deserve to be in the next Government.[1]

The size of the majority is questionable, but in a straight fight Long would have carried the prize. His disappointment was considerable and for some weeks he contemplated retiring from politics altogether, telling Lady Londonderry on New Year's Day that 'for my own part I wish with all my heart I had never entered Parliament or could see my way to getting out of it now.'[2]

Long's disillusionment was as much a matter of policy as of personality. He realised that by agreeing to accept Bonar Law he was implicitly acquiescing in the rejection of his own views in favour of the policies of the Birmingham men, for Law's views on tariff reform were so close to Chamberlain's as to make no difference. Law was clearly on the side of the businessmen. He had already established for himself a reputation as an outspoken tariff reformer, and Long knew that there was little chance that he would sponsor the sort of 'go-slow' fiscal reforms needed to win a general election. Nor did Bonar Law much care for the traditional landed element of the party which Long represented. Chamberlain's withdrawal, on the other hand, carried no implicit depreciation in the fiscal policies for which he had so long agitated. Bonar Law was a compromise candidate only in the sense that he would not split the party. In policy terms he

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[1]Bull's diary, 'Summary of the Second Half of 1911', Bu.P., 4/4.

[2]Long to Lady Londonderry, 1 Jan. 1912, L.L.P., D/Lo/C 666(186).

was a partisan of Chamberlain's, an opponent of Long's. And Long's supporters accepted him only because he was not tainted with the traditions of Liberal Unionism and because he was regarded as an objective authority on economic questions. Chamberlain was seen as prejudiced and tendentious, Bonar Law was an unknown quantity. But Long knew that Law had at least one foot in the Birmingham camp, and the two men had hardly got on well in the past.

Historians have tended to regard Long's candidature for the leadership as something of a joke and have often asserted that Long could never have done the job. This is because they have followed the opinions of the party managers instead of looking at the capacities of Long himself. And the party managers were biased. Balcarres' notorious advice to Chamberlain that he should allow Long to win since Long would make such a mess of things inside a year that Chamberlain would be bound to succeed is as unfair as it is extraordinary.[1] Kipling's remark, too, - 'I confess I wonder that our Party did not plump for Long. He would have been more immaculately useless and genteelly incompetent than anything in sight'[2] - is as prejudiced as it is witty. Long had not made a mess of any office which he had held or of any election which he had fought. To take him at face value as a slow-minded Tory squire, an anachronistic throwback to another age,

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[1]Lansdowne, at least, thought that Balcarres' remark was disgraceful. On 11 Nov. he told Chamberlain that to have accepted Long's leadership in the belief that 'it was not likely to succeed, and that while it lasted the pear would have been ripening for you, would have been quite unworthy.' Lansdowne to Chamberlain, 11 Nov. 1911, A.C.P., AC 9/4/31.

[2]Quoted A.J.P. Taylor, Beaverbrook (London, 1972), p. 70.

was to underestimate his talents. Any man who could rise from the relative obscurity of the Local Government Board to command a good half of the parliamentary party in less than seven years was not to be taken lightly. Long had sat in parliament since 1880; he had represented a number of quite different constituencies; he had proved a good departmental man, a good administrator and a sound policy maker; and he had made a marked success of the one important cabinet post, the Irish Office, he had so far been given.

In the right circumstances, there is no reason to suppose that Long could not have made a competent and successful leader. As for the imputation of plain stupidity, of lack of intellectual power, this was often exaggerated and would not, anyway, have necessarily hindered him. Balfour's intellectual powers were considerable, yet they hardly helped him as party leader. Long believed in straightforward dealing and plain talking. His blunt style, his practicality, his flexibility on all issues save Ireland, his pragmatism, his ability to rally the backbenches - these were qualities which would have stood the party in good stead. To say that Long had 'constantly worked against Balfour, criticising him freely ... and using his party positions as independent bases against the leader'[1] is to paint only half a picture. It is, of course, true that Long criticised

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[1]Ramsden, Age of Balfour and Baldwin, p.95.

Balfour both directly and to his colleagues. But in this he was only expressing criticisms rife in the party, and Balfour's feeble leadership often both invited and justified the attacks. Balfour enjoys the distinction of having led his party to three electoral defeats in the space of five years. Long never allowed his supporters to prompt him too far and he was always ready to fall into line whenever a clear policy was forthcoming. What Long really found intolerable was Balfour's subtle prevarications and inveterate reluctance to let the party know where he stood.[1] Certainly, Long's standing amongst backbenchers allied to his support from Irish Unionists provided a strong and semi-independent powerbase, but unlike Chamberlain he never used his position to foist on the party policies which would not win elections, nor did he seek to ostracise, let alone expel, those who disagreed with him.

Several of Long's contemporaries were of the opinion

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[1]Long always placed great emphasis on the value of strong leadership. Indeed, he regarded it as the crucial ingredient necessary for Conservative success. Ironically, he had been firmly of the opinion that Balfour should be appointed party leader in the Commons on the grounds that Balfour would prove the most decisive candidate. On 14 Oct. 1891 Long had written: 'I cannot say how important I think it is that Arthur should be made Leader - he is the man for the post in every way - we want not only a man with his ability, courage and determination, but also one who will inspire our Party all through the country with courage and awake their sentiment. All this and more Arthur can do.... If any man now living can lead us to victory and keep us together that man is Arthur....' This letter, which was written to Aretas Akers-Douglas, is published in full in Chilston, Chief Whip, pp. 222-3.

that he was capricious, yet he was capricious only in the sense that he could be flexible, as in the case of the Parliament Bill. And flexibility in politics is an advantage, not a disadvantage. Long was equally accomplished at being captious and intransigent when the situation demanded. It is certainly true to say that he could be difficult to work with: if he cared deeply about an issue he would argue his beliefs passionately, sometimes with considerable intemperance. For Long, politics revolved around certain cardinal principles, and these he would defend to the utmost, often with a vehemence which his colleagues mistook for plain bad temper. The only reason for which Long might not have been able to do the work of party leader was failing health. By 1911 he was already suffering from the poor health which was to dog him until his death thirteen years later. Even so, he was to prove during the war years that he could still work long, hard hours, and he was to remain a minister for almost as long as Bonar Law, whom he was to outlive by just a few months. All in all, there is no reason to suppose that Long, if elected or chosen in 1911, might not have made at least as successful a leader as Bonar Law.

The leadership contest of November 1911 was a turning point in the career of Walter Long. It marked the frustration of his ambition, the destruction of his hopes. The years since 1905 had taken him a long way down the

road to the leadership, but he had stumbled at the last hurdle, pipped at the post by a 'drab, pawky, chronically pessimistic'[1] Glasgow businessman of whom he had scarcely heard a decade before. After 1911 he became more progressive, more flexible, more ready to insist on policies which he believed in, less concerned to safeguard his own standing in the party. His ambition did not exactly peter out; it simply took another course. This left Bonar Law in a very dangerous position.

Within a few weeks of his defeat Long had shaken off his depression and returned to work. As before, his main object was to return the Conservatives to power, and he once again took up the question of land reform, to cover both rural and urban areas, as a means to win the party the electoral support which it so patently lacked. He became more and more convinced that land purchase was the only policy which could turn the voters away from opposition policies, such as old age pensions, which not only conferred direct benefits but also carried enormous emotional appeal. Long wanted to produce a Conservative land policy more attractive than that of the Liberals.

In June 1912 he appointed, on behalf of the party, a committee to consider the matter and a report was duly

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[1]This description of Bonar Law is by Arthur Lee. See Alan Clark, ed., A Good Innings: The Private Papers of Viscount Lee of Fareham (London, 1974), p. 119.

presented on 1 August - this committee seems to have been unofficial and is ample evidence of Long's desire to devise an extensive Unionist land policy. Although the report was broadly in sympathy with an extension of land ownership being undertaken by the next Conservative government, it did not, much to Long's annoyance, recommend ownership by smallholders as a valid policy in itself or as a 'panacea for decaying agriculture.'[1] The committee did, however, recommend a minimum agricultural wage fixed by statute[2] and a system of 'graduated bounties on home grown wheat.'[3] These proposals were not taken up.

During the following year an official committee, headed by Lord Salisbury, was charged with considering Unionist agricultural policy and its report was ready by 12 August 1913. It was much less enthusiastic about a legislative minimum wage and it did not suggest any clear policy.[4] Long found the committee's findings very disappointing and told a friend that they had been 'advanced by people who have no practical knowledge or experience of the land question and who really ... are out for votes and nothing else.... I cannot imagine anything more cruel than to make agricultural labourers the playthings of politicians.'[5] He certainly wanted to use land reform to

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[1]Land Committee's recommendations, forwarded to Long on 1 Aug. 1912, W.L.P., WRO 947/439.

[2]Ibid., p. 6. [3]Ibid., p. 8.

[4]Sykes, Tariff Reform in British Politics, p. 278.

[5]Long to Howard Frank (of Knight, Frank and Rutley, London estate agents), copy, 19 Nov. 1913, W.L.P., WRO 947/439.

win votes, but only if the promises made to smallholders had some substance and carried real advantage. He maintained this line up until the outbreak of war.

Bonar Law would not endorse a statutory minimum wage because he knew that the issue was too divisive: his difficulty was to steer a course between those Unionists who wanted to trump Lloyd George with a radical land policy and those who would contemplate no interference with the rights of the employer. The party could not afford to alienate the farmers - a fact which Long pointed out repeatedly.[1] By November 1913 Bonar Law was prepared to commit himself only to an enquiry into low agricultural wages. Anxious not to upset the farmers or threaten party unity on the matter, Long readily accepted this 'via media', and six months later he was still prepared to argue that on the question of statutory wages the party dare go no further than an enquiry.[2]

On 25 November 1913 Long used the opportunity afforded by the annual dinner of the Melksham Agricultural Society to publicise his views in a thinly disguised condemnation of both his own party and the government: 'We ... are in some danger of becoming the victims of aspiring policicians who think that they can gain votes by producing ambitious programmes of land reform.'[3] This was an attempt to cast

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[1]See, for example, Long to Bonar Law, 31 Oct. 1913, B.L.P., 30/3/77, in which Long emphasised the danger of 'alarming the landowners and farmers who are the backbone of our party.'

[2]See memorandum by Long, 6 May 1914, ibid., 32/3/13.

[3]Report of Long's speech, The Times, 26 Nov. 1913.

doubt on Lloyd George's credentials as a land reformer. He stressed that he supported land reform but objected to Liberal policy on the ground that agricultural workers would never become the actual owners of the land they cultivated, remaining the perpetual tenants of the state and liable constantly to interference from an army of government officials,[1] for the Liberals proposed extensive powers for the Board of Agriculture. On Saturday afternoon, 17 January 1914, Long delivered a speech at the Holloway Empire in which he outlined Conservative policy on land reform. Lloyd George had spoken on the subject at the same venue just ten days earlier, so that by putting Long up to advocate a non-partisan policy which appeared to have all the merits which the Liberals' scheme lacked the Conservatives were able to ridicule Lloyd George and refute the allegation that they were not a party of constructive reform.[2] Long was easily able to show that Lloyd George's speech had been full of misrepresentations and inaccuracies, and he received much favourable comment in the press.[3]

Coming from a Conservative politician and landlord often

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[1] Ibid.

[2] The meeting passed a resolution designed to embarrass the government: 'That recognising ... the necessity for Parliament dealing immediately and effectively with questions relating to Housing and Land:- This meeting calls upon the Government to propose legislation on these matters in the next session ... or to give place to the Unionist party which has long been prepared with a practical Housing and Land Policy.' Programme of Holloway Empire meeting, 17 Jan. 1914, Bu.P., 4/9.

[3] See The Observer, 18 Jan. 1914; The Times, The Standard, Daily Express, Pall Mall Gazette, 19 Jan. 1914.

thought of as the personification of squirarchy, Long's ideas were ambitious and far-sighted: he argued for continuity of tenure for industrial tenants in large towns, compensation for improvements carried out by tenants, and protection from 'unreasonable' clauses in all leases. To ensure that the provisions would be enforced in a non-partisan manner, he suggested the appointment of a tribunal which would be wholly independent of government and parliament. Personally, Long would have liked to go much further - something along the lines of his unofficial committee's recommendations of August 1912. That he did not was due to recognition that a large section of the party would not swallow extensive land reform, still less would the farmers and landowners on whom he depended for much of his own political support. But his views hardly square with the usual portrayal of Long as an old-fashioned Tory squire. He had recognised that land reform should be sponsored by the Conservative party from 1909 onwards, but his views had fallen on deaf ears, for neither Balfour nor Bonar Law was very interested in the question. By 1914 the Liberals had made all the political capital out of land reform that there was, and it was Lloyd George who ultimately took the credit, which Long would have had accrue to the Conservative party.

By the time of Bonar Law's elevation to the leadership the free traders in the party had been well and truly

beaten. But there were many moderates left, Long foremost amongst them. As far as these people were concerned the leadership was not a safe haven from the Birmingham faction but a rock of fiscal dogma on which party unity might be dashed and electoral hopes cast to the winds. Many MPs thought that to continue to emphasise tariff reform as the primary electoral issue was foolish and they looked to Long as the main focus of possible opposition to the new leader. In the period between Balfour's departure and Law's reluctant renunciation of 'food taxes' Long became both the protector and leading advocate of all those moderates who wanted a change in the party's tariff reform platform. Bonar Law always had to act in the knowledge that Long was a potential rebel who could probably command majority support amongst the backbenchers. The possibility of Long as party leader was by no means totally dispelled by the events of November 1911.

Just as Long had pressed Balfour to drop 'food taxes', so he pressed Bonar Law, always assuring him that he was a committed tariff reformer in principle. Promising not to make trouble, Long told his new leader on 27 May 1912 that '... tho' I regret we can't emancipate ourselves from what I regard as an unnecessary burden ... I shall not raise the question again. After all it is with me a matter of tactics, not principle.'[1] True to his word, Long made no trouble for several months, but it was more

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[1]Long to Bonar Law, 27 May 1912, B.L.P., 26/3/41.

the result of circumstance than of any new-found deference towards his leader: in June he was off work from illness and from 8 August until 19 October he was in Canada campaigning against home rule. When Long returned home discontent in the party was again mounting and he quickly emerged once more as a major challenge to the leadership.

In April the shadow cabinet had decided that 'food taxes' must remain part of the Conservatives' programme; on 14 November Lansdowne announced, appropriately at the Albert Hall, that there would be no plebiscite on tariff reform, although the referendum pledge had to all intents and purposes been dead and buried since Balfour had refused to endorse its continued existence in January 1911. Now it was officially dead. Bonar Law and Lansdowne would not go back on the position they had adopted. Long knew this. He also knew that party feeling was so strong that Law might be forced to resign. Yet he trod very warily and was careful not to appear to put himself at the head of any movement to unseat Bonar Law.

The maintenance and development of Conservative support in the North West was especially important, as Lancashire seemed to hold the key to the winning of a working majority. And it was precisely in this part of the country that 'food taxes' were likely to do the most damage, a point which Long's correspondents made again and again in their efforts to persuade him to lead a rebellion. He deliberately adopted an ambiguous position,

making it clear that he regarded 'food taxes' as a severe handicap yet at the same time protesting loyalty to Bonar Law. If there was a party split, as looked very likely by the end of 1912, Long did not want to be labelled as its engineer. When, for example, his friend, Sir Harry Samuel, asked for advice as to what line to adopt, he made his private views explicit yet stressed that they must remain confidential as he was 'a most loyal supporter of Mr Bonar Law.'[1]

In other words, Long was trying to have it both ways, but his friends and supporters in the party knew very well that he detested 'food taxes' and 'the prevailing and by no means unfounded conviction that attempts are being made to force a policy down the throats of men who are sincerely opposed to it.'[2] For a while, it looked as if his private conviction a year before that Bonar Law would not last long would be proved right. Nor had his opinion of Chamberlain changed much. Although the two men had attempted to patch up their animosity towards one another by fostering relations of rather punctilious courtesy, feelings of suspicion and bitterness were too deeply rooted to die quickly. On 18 December Chamberlain complained directly of 'mischief makers' and attempts 'to divide the Party between your friends and mine.'[3] He received little sympathy from Long who, on

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[1]Long to Samuel, copy, 30 Dec. 1912, W.L.P., WRO 947/446/16.

[2]Long to Lady Londonderry, 14 Dec. 1912, L.L.P., D/Lo/C 666(227).

[3]Chamberlain to Long, 18 Dec. 1912, W.L.P., WRO 947/446/4.

the following day, confided his opinion of Chamberlain to H.A. Gwynne of the Morning Post: Chamberlain and the Birmingham men, he said, were having things too much their own way.

> The opinion is growing ... that our policy and tactics are dictated from Birmingham ... the Conservative party will not have this ... there ought to be at least some little understanding that both sides are to abate some of their keenest desires. So far, and during all these years, it has been ourselves - the majority - the Conservative party - who have been called upon to subordinate their views to the views of the minority.[1]

He continued to sit on the fence, the focus of anti-tariff reform sentiment, yet committed in principle to 'food taxes' and a loyal supporter of Bonar Law.

He did not need to do more. Lansdowne's abrogation of the referendum pledge, the by-election defeat at Bolton on 23 November, Bonar Law's Ashton-under-Lyne speech on 16 December, Northcliffe's anti-'stomach taxes' campaign in The Times and Daily Mail, the Lancashire Conservatives' revolt led by Lord Derby - all looked set to force Bonar Law's resignation without any help from Long. He did not believe that Law would win through. As he told Lady Londonderry on Christmas Eve, 'B.L. ... seems so doubtful ... and to feel his position acutely.

F.E. never consulted him as to his last two speeches and

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[1]Long to Gwynne, copy, 19 Dec. 1912, ibid., 446/28. Lord Balcarres had recorded in his diary on 21 Oct. 1912 that Bonar Law is 'always afraid of an explosion between Austen and Walter Long. Whatever the former says is immediately pronounced ridiculous and 'I never heard such a proposal' - Walter is trés difficile, and B.L. suffers during these recurrent crises.' The Crawford Papers, p. 281.

... the party do not care to be lectured.... I am afraid B.L. is very much wedded to these accursed taxes.'[1] On Christmas Day Derby wrote to say that he intended to stand firm and would not 'be browbeaten by the foodtaxers any more',[2] information which naturally encouraged Long to take a firmer line himself. On New Year's Day he tried to force the pace by observing to Bonar Law that, 'as an old Food Taxer, one who firmly believes in Imperial Preference and who thinks Food Taxes are just, I am convinced that as a matter of practical politics we shall not be able to impose them,'[3] and on the following day he drove the point home by insisting that tariff reform would lose the party the next election, as it had lost the last three. 'Food taxes' must be dropped, he argued, unless the Conservatives fought and won a second election with tariff reform as a specific issue.[4]

Bonar Law now knew that Long might not continue to avoid an open rebellion indefinitely, and these two letters must have played a part in persuading Law to give in. Carson's initiative in drawing up a formal memorial requesting, on behalf of all Unionist members - except those on the front bench - Bonar Law and Lansdowne to remain at their posts provided a much needed way out. Long's position was immensely strong. A quiet and

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[1]Long to Lady Londonderry, 24 Dec. 1912, L.L.P., D/Lo/C 666(230).

[2]Derby to Long, 25 Dec. 1912, quoted Churchill, Lord Derby, pp. 176-7.

[3]Long to John Baird (Bonar Law's PPS), copy, 1 Jan. 1913, W.L.P., WRO 947/446/41.

[4]Long to Bonar Law, copy, 2 Jan. 1913, ibid., 446/37.

informal canvass of Unionist MPs had been held in December and had shown an enormous majority in favour of abandoning 'food taxes' and reverting to Balfour's policy of deciding the issue by plebiscite.[1] Long was absolutely sure of his ground when he told Bonar Law that 'food taxes' must go. Resignation was Law's only alternative and this was clearly what Long expected. Up to this point Bonar Law had refused all compromise; his acceptance of Carson's memorial represented a surrender on his part, for he agreed that 'food taxes' must be the subject of a second election. A shaky party unity was restored. Long had won a policy victory without laying himself open to a charge of disloyalty. Not surprisingly, he was very pleased with the result, commenting on 10 January that, 'I get many letters showering praise on A.C. for his behaviour, and I hear F.E. has been saying there are too many leaders and too much talking! It is all very amusing.'[2]

Once Bonar Law had conceded Long fell swiftly into line and up until the outbreak of war in August 1914 he gave his leader little trouble over policy, except in the case of Ireland and the methods to be adopted in face of the government's home rule Bill. He regarded Bonar Law's decision as Chamberlain's just deserts, and provided the decision stood he was prepared to leave well alone.

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[1]See Sir Samuel Scott to Long, 19 Dec. 1912, and G.R. Lane Fox to Long, 22 Dec. 1912, ibid., 446/15 and 446/17 respectively.

[2]Long to Lady Londonderry, 10 Jan. 1913, L.L.P., D/Lo/C 666(234).

For as long as Bonar Law remained sound on Ireland, he was happy. At the end of June 1913 he put before Bonar Law a number of proposals for Conservative policy. They were sent confidentially: he told nobody else of his plans, deliberately leaving the way clear for Law to take up the proposals as if they were his own. Long's memorandum of 27 June[1] shows how wrong it is to regard him as an opponent of change or an enemy of far-reaching policies. Amongst other things he argued that official party policy should include extensive land reform, housing with state aid, Redistribution, and an amended Insurance Act to bring the Friendly Societies within the scheme. Significantly, there was no mention of tariff reform. This hardly squares with the view that 'Walter Long represented the best tradition of what Lord Salisbury once described as "pure Squire conservatism".'[2] It is, on the contrary, evidence of the kind of vote-catching policies to which Long would have committed the Unionist party had he been leader.

But why did Long fail to take a firmer stand against Bonar Law during the winter of 1912-13 when the discontent over 'food taxes' could have been used to secure another change in the leadership as well as a change in policy?

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[1]Memorandum by Long to Bonar Law, 27 June 1913, B.L.P., 29/5/57. Long's insistence that advocacy of social reform would win votes had already been vindicated by the favourable reaction which had greeted Unionist sponsorship of the Houses for the Working Classes Bill. Introduced and supported by the Conservatives, the measure had received a second reading without a division on 18 Apr. 1913. The Observer of 20 Apr. had commented warmly on the 'sincere social passion of the Unionist speakers' and on Long's 'scathing exposure' of the inadequacies of Liberal housing policy.

[2]Blake, Unknown Prime Minister, p. 73.

Long had, after all, withdrawn in November 1911 partly because he believed that Bonar Law would soon be forced out. Why, then, did he leave the running to his supporters and not assume the leadership of the rebellion himself? The answer is that his health was particularly bad - some sort of blood poisoning which kept him in bed for days at a time - precisely during the period when the discontent was at its height. And illness does not make a man especially pugnacious. He had been fighting against Chamberlain and the domination of tariff reform on and off for six years, and he was beginning to tire of the party's internecine squabbles, so much so that it seems he even contemplated retiring from politics. In a fit of depression he told Lansdowne on 9 January 1913:

> I have had 33 years of the House, 27 of which have been spent on the Front Bench and I confess to being very tired, and I should be thankful to settle down quietly here and look on for the remainder of my time. ... I am rather low about myself, this vile poison has made what my Dr. calls "a malevolent reappearance", and between this and the microbe which is weakly injected to fight it I feel rather a wreck. I get my bad nights, one of the usual symptoms I am told, but rather a wearisome one.[1]

Another reason was Long's genuine concern for the welfare of the party, and once 'food taxes' had been ditched he was quick to offer Bonar Law assurances of

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[1]Long to Lansdowne, copy, 9 Jan. 1913, W.L.P., WRO 947/446/36.

his loyalty.[1] By keeping one foot in each camp Long could jump either way in the event of a party split or another victory for the tariff reformers. His patience placed him in a very strong position, for if Bonar Law resigned he could emerge as his successor in a way that had not been possible the previous year. In order to make the most of this opportunity, should it arise, it was essential that he could not be charged with plotting against Bonar Law. It was for this reason that he studiously avoided the promptings of his supporters, preferring instead to keep a low profile whilst events developed. There was always the distinct possibility that Bonar Law would resign. If so, Chamberlain would hardly be in the running, because if the party would not have Law and 'food taxes' it would not have Chamberlain either. Carson or F.E. Smith would never command the loyalty of enough backbenchers, and that left just Long. And the fact that he had kept a foot in both camps could have helped to restore unity. He would certainly have been acceptable to the free-fooders, to advocates of a 'go-slow' policy on fiscal reform, and to the Irish Unionists; it was just possible that the tariff reformers would accept him rather than break the party. Long was, after all, committed in principle to fiscal reform and imperial preference, even to 'food taxes'. He took care

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[1]Long to Bonar Law, 8 Jan. and 9 Jan. 1913, B.L.P., 28/2/34 and 28/2/40 respectively.

to say so frequently. He was only insisting that the Conservatives must win an election first. Electoral victory was the pre-requisite of tariff reform, and not the other way round as Chamberlain liked to argue. But this was hardly the same as saying that tariff reform could never be party policy and that 'food taxes' should never be considered. The tariff reformers had waited since 1903. It was not, therefore, impossible that, having tried one leader and lost him in barely a year, they might be prepared to wait a bit longer.

Long could not, of course, foresee that Carson would come up with a 'via media' or that Bonar Law would compromise. As it was, Law did not seek a compromise solution on his own initiative. Long's calculations were sound: it was reasonable to suppose that Bonar Law might resign and that he, Long, might emerge as leader, more by default and lack of any other candidate than by unanimous choice. If so, he was ready. He would not grasp at the leadership a second time, but if it was to fall to him he made sure that he had not taken action which made its acceptance impossible. Waldorf Astor was by no means alone in January 1913 in being firmly of the opinion that Long would undoubtedly replace Bonar Law.[1] Long was quite happy to see Law abandon 'food taxes' and stay on as leader; he was also ready and waiting if Law had decided to resign. His letter to Lansdowne suggesting

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[1]Gollin, "Observer" and Garvin, p. 382.

that he might retire altogether from politics was written, it should be noticed, after Bonar Law had conceded and therefore after Long knew that there was absolutely no chance of his becoming leader. Whilst the fight over 'food taxes' was on he gave no indication that he was fed up with politics, despite his illness. In a sense, Bonar Law outmanoeuvred Long in the leadership contest twice, once by persisting against all the odds in an unlikely candidature, and once by sticking to an intransigent line, then suddenly renouncing it at the last moment. For all his outspokenness, Long proved a good party man in the years between 1906 and 1914. He was nearly the leader, but not quite.

CHAPTER THREE

THE UNION AND NOTHING BUT THE UNION, 1906-1914

Of all leading politicians in the years before the outbreak of war in 1914, Walter Long enjoys a reputation as the most consistently hostile to any compromise over Irish home rule. He supported the most bellicose expressions of Irish Unionism; he channelled money to assist the arming of the Ulster Volunteers; he threatened to mount a party rebellion if Bonar Law agreed to a compromise solution with the Liberals; and, as a prominent member of His Majesty's opposition, he courted civil war and treason. Yet he did not believe that there would be civil war in Ireland. And he did not believe that Asquith could possibly succeed in passing a Home Rule Bill.

His opposition was based throughout on the premise that the Liberals could be turned out of office, that home rule could be defeated in parliament, without recourse to the use of force in Ulster, and that the constitution of Great Britain, as represented by the Union of 1800, could be upheld and maintained by a determined Conservative party. His intransigence was based simply on the premise that obduracy and steadfast determination were, politically, the best tactics with which to defeat the Liberals. The threat of violence was a useful expression of this obduracy, nothing more. What mattered above all else was to keep the

Conservative party united around a policy of unyielding hostility to all forms of home rule, and to prevent Bonar Law wavering in response to Asquith's offers of compromise.

Unionist defeat at the general election of January 1906 put an end to Long's official connections with Ireland for more than a decade, but personal defeat at Bristol South helped to strengthen his ties with Irish Unionism, for it obliged him to accept the offer of Dublin County (South), one of only two constituencies in Ireland, outside Ulster, which Conservatives could hope to hold.[1] When Edward Saunderson, the leader of the Irish Unionists, died in 1906 Long slipped easily into his place - as an Englishman sitting for an Irish constituency and as an ex-Chief Secretary Long was perfectly fitted to maintain close contacts between Conservative interests in both countries.[2] By associating Irish Unionism with protection of the landed interest and defence of the Empire Long could count on a high level of support from the Conservative party at Westminster, especially as the issue was simple, clear-cut

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[1]Long captured Dublin County (South) on 19 Jan. 1906 from the Nationalists, defeating his opponent by well over 1,000 votes in a straight fight. The Unionists would have won the seat in 1900 had it not been for the fact that their vote was split between two candidates, thus allowing the Nationalist, John Mooney, a victory.

[2]Lyons, Ireland Since the Famine, p. 297.

and carried considerable emotional appeal - all qualities which the policy of tariff reform lacked. Long hoped that Irish Unionism might unite and strengthen the party where tariff reform divided and enervated it.

Indeed, the Conservative party was peculiarly susceptible to Southern Unionist pressure, even more so than to the demands of the Ulstermen. To begin with, Irish Unionists were well represented amongst the group of thirty or so leaders who determined party policy. Lords Lansdowne, Londonderry, Devonshire, Midleton and Ashbourne, for example, were all large Irish landowners with an influential voice in Conservative counsels. There was a natural sympathy between landed British Conservatives and their Irish counterparts, a sympathy which is symbolised by Long's own unique position. Under Long's leadership Irish Unionism became for the Conservative party a defence of the Empire and a protection from wanton attacks on the landed classes.[1]

Long had been greatly assisted in his work as Chief Secretary by his principal private secretary, J.J. Taylor, a staunch Unionist animated by intense dislike of Sir Anthony MacDonell and deep distrust of Liberal intentions towards Ireland. Knowing full well that Taylor would not willingly fall in with any Liberal schemes of devolution, Long tried to trick James Bryce, his successor at the

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[1]The attraction of the Irish Unionist cause for the Conservative party has been more fully considered in the following, to which I am indebted: P.J. Buckland, 'The Southern Irish Unionists, the Irish Question, and British Politics, 1906-14', Irish Historical Studies 15 (1967).

Irish Office,[1] into taking Taylor on as a private secretary. This would have given Long access to the very heart of Bryce's administration, for Taylor was quite ready to break confidence with his Liberal masters in pursuit of the Unionist cause. But Bryce was not to be duped, choosing instead an English civil servant who had had no previous dealings with Long.[2] Nonetheless, Taylor remained at Dublin Castle and proved very useful in supplying Long with inside information, continuing to regard Long as his 'Chief' for many months to come.[3]

Shortly before leaving office Long had been approached by members of the Dublin Stock Exchange who objected to the way in which investments under the 1903 Land Act were always made by Chancery brokers. Business was being lost and the Dublin stockbrokers hoped that Long would try to remedy their grievance. On 9 December 1905 Long had told the Dublin brokers that he had 'the fullest sympathy with ... claims so ably and moderately placed before me.'[4] But it was not until Taylor pressed the stockbrokers' case and told him that 'Mr. Bryce has written on the file ... that he will do nothing'[5] that Long decided to take up the

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[1]James Bryce was appointed Chief Secretary for Ireland on 14 Dec. 1905.

[2]See Bryce to Long, 12 Dec., 23 Dec., and 24 Dec. 1905, L.P., Add. MS. 62409.

[3]Taylor wrote to Sir William Bull on 13 Dec. 1905: 'No Chief Secy. has ever captured the affection of officials and people as he did during his brief reign.' See Bu.P., 3/12.

[4]Long to C.A. Pim, Honorary Secretary to the Dublin Stock Exchange, copy, 9 Dec. 1905, W.L.P., WRO 947/86.

[5]Covering note from Taylor to G.A. Arbuthnot, Long's private secretary, n.d., but written sometime early in 1906 when Taylor forwarded the relevant documents to Long, ibid.

issue. With Taylor's assistance Long was able to associate himself publicly with the Dublin brokers and use the association to oppose the new Chief Secretary's policy. Long's case had objective merits which Bryce could not hope to counter, for a small number of government brokers had been given a virtual monopoly over the investment of very large sums. The issue also helped Long to secure his place as the rising star of Irish Unionism - a majority of the members of the Dublin Stock Exchange were of Unionist persuasion and many individual members were influential within Long's new constituency.

In the first three months of 1906 alone Taylor provided Long with information concerning recruiting levels of the R.I.C.,[1] government policy regarding a grant for Wicklow Harbour and line extensions to the Cavan and Leitrim Railway,[2] and proposed higher educational policy,[3] as well as forwarding a large quantity of Irish Office papers which he thought Long might find useful when preparing parliamentary questions.

There was clearly no love lost between Taylor and James Bryce, a fact which may have had something to do with Taylor's relegation to the finance division of the Irish government, a post where he had little opportunity to influence Liberal policy. By the middle of February 1906

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[1] See W.L.P., WRO 947/106.
[2] See ibid., WRO 947/90.
[3] See ibid., WRO 947/94.

he was complaining bitterly to his old Chief:

> I am attached to the Finance Division, but have absolutely nothing to do. I have not had 10 minutes work to do since I was sent there - a nice commentary on Anthony's [MacDonnell's] complaints ... last year that the Department was overworked and undermanned.[1]

Probably, Taylor was deliberately given no work because Bryce and MacDonnell realised that he could not be trusted to keep sensitive information to himself.

Even so, Taylor was able to provide Long with wide-ranging information concerning Bryce's policies and decisions. To take but one example, early in 1906 Taylor told Long that the Treasury, on Bryce's recommendation, had refused to sanction salary increases for either the President of Queen's College, Belfast, or of Queen's College, Cork - increases which Long had himself put forward in 1905. In the normal course of events the decision would not be made known until the estimates for 1906-7 were published, but by giving him advance notice Taylor enabled Long to have an apposite and embarrassing question ready immediately the decision was announced.

Although Taylor remained at Dublin Castle until 1920 his habit of confiding government business to Long seems to have petered out after a few months, and Bryce was the only Chief Secretary to suffer from Taylor's systematic and deliberate disclosures. Taylor certainly

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[1]Taylor to W.R.K. Mainwaring, Long's private secretary, 14 Feb. 1906, ibid., WRO 947/89.

helped Long to establish his position as leader of the Irish Unionists, but, once secure, Long troubled the over-zealous official no more, although he never forgot Taylor's services and did his utmost to further the civil servant's career.[1]

The autumn of 1906 was taken up with Long's ruthless campaign to expose the Irish policies of Wyndham and MacDonnell, a campaign which further enhanced his reputation as the champion of Irish Unionism and showed Balfour that Ireland could not be quietly pushed to one side. Long resented Chamberlain's claim that tariff reform was the major issue and believed that the arguments surrounding fiscal reform not only weakened the party's

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[1] Long kept in touch with Taylor for many years. When, in Sept. 1916, the post of Asst. Under-Secretary looked like becoming vacant, Taylor wrote confidentially to Long to ask for a recommendation (see Taylor to Long, 6 Sept. 1916, W.L.P. WRO 947/394). Long duly wrote to the Lord Lieutenant recommending a promotion for the 'able, experienced, loyal and hard-working' Taylor (see Long to Lord Wimbourne, copy, 7 Sept. 1916, ibid.). In the event, Taylor had to wait until 1918 for the job. When in 1920 it was decided to clear Dublin Castle of certain officials, so as to prepare for the smooth administration of the Government of Ireland Bill, of which Long was then in charge, Taylor was designated for early retirement. Having served in the Castle since 1883 he felt hard done by, regarding Long's change of heart over home rule as a betrayal of his life's work. Although quite at odds with Long's sponsorship of the Government of Ireland Bill, Taylor appealed to his old 'Chief' for special treatment, hoping to get a compensation payment of £6,000. Long did everything in his power to get it for him, bombarding the Treasury with letters arguing Taylor's case. This led to a breach between Long and Sir Warren Fisher, the permanent head of the Treasury (for terse correspondence between the two men concerning Taylor's claims see W.L.P., WRO 947/369/1). In the end Long had to drop his demands and Taylor had to make do with the £3,000 originally offered. So ended the career of J.J. Taylor.

electoral appeal but also detracted from the much more important home rule question. He also resented the fact that Chamberlain possessed in the Tariff Reform League and Liberal Unionist organisation a semi-independent powerbase which sapped at Balfour's authority as leader. Long therefore decided to set up his own semi-independent organisation as a means to steal some of the limelight from the tariff reform campaign and to strengthen the position of Irish Unionists within the party.

Long first began to sound out possible supporters late in 1906. He was received hesitantly at first, mainly on the grounds that he was arrogating to himself and to his own organisation a policy which was, after all, supposed to be the party's 'raison d'etre'. As the Duke of Devonshire pointed out on 9 November:

> The party which was in office till this year and is now in opposition calls itself the Unionist party and presumably exists for the defence of the Union - It has funds and an organisation, and has been able without any special organisation to defeat two attacks by Mr. Gladstone on the Union - Why can it not be trusted to do so again? If as I fear is the case, the Unionist party is now weaker than it was on either of those occasions, is there any use in proclaiming the fact ...?[1]

Long wanted Devonshire to be the titular head of the new organisation, but Devonshire would have no truck with

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[1]Devonshire to Long, 9 Nov. 1906, L.P., Add. MS. 62410.

the scheme, writing bluntly that 'I do not care to be the figurehead of a political organisation in which I should take no active part.'[1]

The organisation, calling itself the Union Defence League (U.D.L.), was eventually launched under Long's chairmanship in 1907 with the intention of inculcating electors at constituency level with the imminent threat to the Union posed by the Liberal government. Long was by now devoting a very considerable part of his time to Ireland: on 16 January Austen Chamberlain observed to Lord Ridley that 'Walter Long is ... more and more engrossed ... by the Irish question, which for him ... overshadows all others.'[2] The League's first meetings were held in February and Long directed its earliest activities against the government's Irish Council Bill, speaking against the measure at meetings held throughout the early summer of 1907. The withdrawal of the bill by the government, however, owed much more to the hostility of the Irish Nationalists in parliament than to the opposition of the U.D.L. Indeed, the initial impact of the U.D.L. was slight and Long often found that his speakers were turned away by local party organisations on the ground that anti-home rule propaganda would not win by-elections. At one point he became so annoyed by this that he complained to Balfour in the hope that local parties might be pressed

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[1] Devonshire to Long, 26 Nov. 1906, ibid.

[2] Chamberlain to Ridley, 16 Jan. 1907, quoted Petrie, Austen Chamberlain, 1, 204.

into giving the U.D.L. workers a hearing.[1]

Throughout 1907 Long protested vociferously that Augustine Birrell, who succeeded James Bryce as Chief Secretary in January, presided over a flaccid and incompetent Irish government. In the Commons he assumed the role of the Unionists' chief spokesman on all Irish matters. By the end of the year he was thoroughly disheartened, fearing that Birrell's placid urbanity and studied inactivity would invite a nationalist rising. To Lady Londonderry he wrote on 20 November:

> News from Ireland is deplorable.... The people, quick to see when the arm of Government is feeble, do as they like, cattle driving is becoming a new national sport. The police are helpless, they are not properly backed up by Government.... Magistrates and juries will not convict ... things will go from bad to worse and we shall have a rebellion in the country.[2]

A fortnight later Long reported to Bonar Law, still a relative newcomer to Tory politics:

> Ireland is gradually slipping into a state of anarchy and complete lawlessness, and people in this country are getting tired of the everlasting Irish question; and if we do not take care we shall have a semi-rebellion in Ireland, and the Union will be allowed to go through the boredom of our people.[3]

Yet Long could do little to detract from the tariff reform

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[1] See Long to Balfour, 17 July 1908, B.P., Add. MS. 49777.

[2] Long to Lady Londonderry, 20 Nov. 1907, L.L.P., D/Lo/C 666(22).

[3] Long to Bonar Law, copy, 5 Dec. 1907, L.P., Add. MS. 62404.

struggle going on within the party, still less to force Birrell to take a firmer line.[1] The U.D.L., justly described as a 'rather ineffectual symbol of Irish Unionist anxieties',[2] continued to campaign in the face of stubborn indifference amongst English voters, and Long's semi-independent powerbase never achieved the same strength or influence as the Chamberlain organisation centred on Birmingham. Only after the introduction of the third Home Rule Bill in 1912 did the U.D.L. come into its own as a centrepiece of Unionist opposition to the Liberals' Irish policy. Meanwhile, Long continued to raise subscriptions and kept the organisation in good working order, but it achieved nothing of significance.

It has already been remarked that there was a good degree of political calculation in Long's repeated emphasis of his connections with Ireland. Nowhere can the shallowness of Long's claim to be an Irishman at heart be better demonstrated than in his attempts to return to an English constituency as soon as possible. Again and again in the years between 1906 and 1914 Long identified himself in his speeches with the interests of Irish Unionists, particularly those of the south, yet, privately, he detested his enforced sojourn as an Irish

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[1]Long was perhaps the most vociferous critic of Augustine Birrell on the Unionist side. Patricia Jalland, in 'A Liberal Chief Secretary and the Irish Question: Augustine Birrell, 1907-1914', Historical Journal 19 (1976), has demonstrated that, contrary to his reputation for lackadaisical inefficiency, Birrell's tenure of the Irish Office, at least up until 1912, was notable for its successes rather than its failures. In 1908 Birrell settled the long-standing problem of the Irish universities and in 1909 he was responsible for further land reform.

[2]Fanning, 'The Unionist party and Ireland', p. 151.

MP. He found repeated visits to Dublin an irritating interference with his parliamentary routine and his weekends at Rood Ashton, and he began looking for a safe English seat almost immediately, planning his move to the Strand from as early as 1907. There was certainly some truth in Lloyd George's jibe that Long was no more than 'an amiable Wiltshire Orangeman'.[1] By April 1908 Long had heard privately that he would be nominated for the Strand if he so wished; he promptly informed Acland-Hood that he was ready to give up the chairmanship of the Irish Unionists and intended to accept the invitation.[2] The party managers wanted Long to stay where he was, but he would not entertain the idea of relinquishing the opportunity of a safe London seat in order to continue as the Irish Unionist leader. The alacrity and determination with which Long accepted the invitation shows that he had taken Dublin County (South) only because he had lost his Bristol constituency, not because of any desire to ally himself more closely with Irish Unionism. By June 1908 the matter was settled; Long was to move as soon as a general election permitted.[3]

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[1]Report of a speech by Lloyd George at Wellington Hall, Belfast, 8 Feb. 1907, L.G.P., B/5/1/6.

[2]Long to Acland Hood, copy, 10 Apr. 1908, L.P., Add. MS. 62413.

[3]The move was, not surprisingly, engineered by Sir William Bull in London. Bull first tried to get Acland Hood's endorsement, but the chief whip was 'dead against it' and asserted that Long 'must stick to the Ulstermen' (Bull's diary, 6 Apr. 1908, Bu.P., 3/17). The move was deliberately intended to further Long's career - a safe London seat would protect him from electoral misfortune and strengthen his position within the party. As one of his private secretaries, Gerald Arbuthnot, put it, 'It would be the biggest service at this point in his career that anyone could render him.' (Arbuthnot to Bull, 9 Apr. 1908, ibid.). Bull's influence as

Long realised only too well that Ireland's fate hung upon the reform of the House of Lords. Until the 1909 Budget and the Parliament Bill brought home rule out of the political closet once again he could do little save keep the U.D.L. in fighting order and reiterate at every opportunity his determination to maintain the Union at all costs. Consequently, the period between the burying of the dispute at the end of 1906 over Sir Anthony MacDonnell's appointment and the first election of 1910 represents something of a lull before the storm. But once home rule was restored to the realm of practical politics Long took up the Unionist cause with a vengeance, and until the outbreak of war in August 1914 made even the Irish problem shrink to relative insignificance defeat of home rule became the single most important aim of his political life.

The first election of 1910 enabled Long to move to the Strand, one of the safest Conservative constituencies in the country. The seat contained a high proportion of non-resident electors and so demanded the minimum of constituency work. It had been the property of the Smith family, W.H. Smith, founder of the firm of newsagents of the same name, holding it until his demise in 1891, when it had

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chairman of the London Unionist MPs was decisive, and Long was duly offered the seat. He intended that the London MPs should become a part of his powerbase within the party: 'If the London MPs are properly organised and led they ought to be a real force in making this country's history' (Long to Bull, 10 Apr. 1908, ibid.). As Bull confided to his diary, 'I have put Long in as the candidate for the Strand in spite of the opposition of the Whips - They do not guess how much I have had to do with it.' (Bull's diary, 5 July 1908, ibid.).

passed to his son. 'No Liberal candidate ever secured as much as one third of the poll' in the quarter century before Long came to the constituency. In January 1910 he received nearly seventy-five per cent of the votes cast, a proportion which was increased still further in the general election of December 1910.[1] Here, at least, Long was on safe territory and able to devote much more of his time to fighting home rule in parliament.

Although no longer an Irish Unionist MP Long continued for some months to lead the group in the Commons side by side with Sir Edward Carson. On 22 February he told the House:

> I believe ... the Government are trying to do two things which are inconsistent.... They are trying to work a revolution, and they are trying to play the part of constitutional ministers.... We ... stand for a definite principle. I may say ... that we are as resolutely determined today as ever we were to resist by all means in our power any attempts to grant ... Home Rule.... It must do immense mischief to Ireland, and it must do irremediable mischief to the United Kingdom.[2]

But agitation against home rule was still a low-key affair, for the Conservative party spent most of 1910 sorting out its attitude to the Parliament Bill and wrangling over the place of tariff reform in its electoral platform. According to a memorandum by John Redmond, dated 23 June

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[1] Pelling, Social Geography, pp. 30, 35-6.

[2] 14 H.C. Deb. ser.5 cols. 142-5.

1910, Long requested an informal meeting to discuss 'the possibility of settling a Home Rule scheme, to be adopted by consent.'[1] As this is the only piece of evidence to suggest that Long ever considered accepting home rule as early as 1910 its accuracy must be called into question. Most probably, Redmond was either misinformed about, or misinterpreted, Long's intentions. Clearly, if such a meeting ever took place nothing came of it.

In November Long formally vacated his position as chairman of the Irish Unionists[2] in parliament and began to think about organising a long-term strategy against home rule, both in the Commons and in the English constituencies. He hoped that the Irish question would overshadow the tariff reform campaign, pushing Austen Chamberlain into the background and uniting the Conservative party around this one single issue. Long regarded Balfour's Albert Hall pledge of 29 November 1910 as a first step in the party's move away from fiscal reform as the dominating issue - it was for this reason that he was so annoyed by Balfour's refusal to uphold the pledge. As Long confided to Professor A.V. Dicey, it would be a good thing to forget tariff reform altogether, for

> ... as we are confronted by these two great National perils - the practical destruction of the Constitution

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[1]Quoted in Denis Gwynn, The Life of John Redmond (London, 1932), p. 182.

[2]Long's letter of resignation is dated 8 Nov. 1910 and can be found in L.P., Add. MS. 62415; although Long did not formally vacate his position as chairman of the Irish Unionists until November, Sir Edward Carson appears to have been offered and to have accepted the leadership of the group as early as February. See Hyde, Carson, p. 258; A.T.Q. Stewart, Edward Carson (Dublin, 1981), pp. 70-1.

> and the passing of a Home Rule Bill - every politician ought to give prominence to these two questions, and make it perfectly clear that everything else for the present is in abeyance as compared with them.[1]

From 1910 onwards Dicey and Long corresponded regularly on the subject of Irish home rule. Dicey, the Unionists' foremost authority on constitutional law, found in Long a practical spokesman for his own unbending views and in turn provided Long with intellectual analysis of the constitutional and legal niceties of the problem.[2]

The acceptance by the Lords on 10 August 1911 of the Parliament Bill was the signal for an intensification of the U.D.L.'s campaign against home rule. Only the Lords' two year veto now stood between nationalist Ireland and the achievement of home rule.[3] In the meantime, Long

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[1] Long to Dicey, copy, 24 Nov. 1910, L.P., Add. MS. 62406.

[2] For a consideration of Dicey's attitude to home rule see Hugh Tulloch, 'A.V. Dicey and the Irish Question, 1870-1922', The Irish Jurist 15 (1980). For Dicey's own closely argued objections to Irish autonomy seé his England's Case Against Home Rule (London, 1886).

[3] Patricia Jalland, The Liberals and Ireland: The Ulster Question in British Politics to 1914 (Brighton, 1980), pp. 27-8, has argued, on the basis of party strength in the House of Commons after the election of Dec. 1910, that the Liberals were not dependent on Irish votes, a myth which, she asserts, was largely created by Unionist propaganda. The strength of the parties was as follows: 272 Liberals, 272 Conservatives, of which 17 were Irish Unionists, 84 Irish Nationalists and 42 Labour. Dr Jalland suggests that if all Irish members are omitted from the calculation the Liberals had a majority of seventeen over the Unionists, a majority which could be topped up on occasion as a result of the Liberal alliance with Labour. It therefore follows, in Dr Jalland's view, that the Liberals could have governed without Irish Nationalist support. The trouble with this argument, however, is that it fails to take account of the fact that the Nationalists held a balance of power and were thus able to turn out a government of either party at their whim. Liberal dependence on Irish votes was the consequence of Redmond's unique power to destroy the government by voting against it - an unlikely contingency perhaps, but one which

determined to turn the Liberals out of office and to restore a strong Irish administration to Dublin Castle. On 6 April the U.D.L. had concluded an agreement at Londonderry House with the Irish Unionist MPs and the Unionists Associations of Ireland Joint Committee. Apart from placing up to eighty platform speakers at Long's disposal, this agreement gave the U.D.L. the sole right to campaign in England, Wales and Scotland, to act as a Bureau of Information for Conservative MPs, and to appeal for funds outside Ireland.[1] From the end of 1911 onwards, in accordance with the terms of the Londonderry House Agreement, the U.D.L. mounted a vigorous propaganda attack on the government, on home rule, and on the Irish Nationalists at Westminster.

The campaign was conducted with considerable skill and innovation. There was a travelling exhibition of photographs of outrages in Ireland, laying particular emphasis on arson, intimidation and cattle-maiming, and there was a poster campaign in all the towns where Redmond spoke, usually drawing attention to his more truculent and ambiguous pronouncements. So-called 'representative

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Asquith could ill afford to overlook. And by 1914, of course, the Unionists outnumbered the Liberals in the House. As Lord Balcarres noted on 24 Feb. 1910: 'The fact is that the little group of ten independent nationalists is able to sway the whole Redmondite faction, which in turn by combining with us can evict the government tomorrow.' Balcarres's diary, The Crawford Papers, p. 146. For a detailed discussion of the arrangements between the Liberals and the Irish Nationalists after the first election of 1910 see Ronan Fanning, 'The Irish Policy of Asquith's Government and the Cabinet Crisis of 1910' in Art Cosgrave and Donal McCartney, eds., Studies in Irish History (Dublin, 1979).

[1]Memorandum of the Londonderry House Agreement, 6 Apr. 1911, Patrick Buckland, ed., Irish Unionism, 1885-1923 (H.M.S.O. Belfast, 1973), pp. 318-21.

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Irish farmers' were brought across to take the platform throughout England and to recount their experiences as the victims of boycott and nationalist intolerance.[1] By 1912 the U.D.L. had motor vans equipped with projectors to tour the countryside offering free slide shows of the case against home rule.[2] These shows naturally attracted large crowds and even Asquith paid reluctant tribute to the U.D.L. campaign when he complained in the Commons that the home rule 'bogey' was 'placarded on almost every wall in every constituency.'[3] Long never really understood that only in Ulster was there any inveterate feeling on which English politicians could rely, for he hoped that a campaign in the English constituencies could be used to turn public opinion against the Liberal government. In practice, the typical English voter viewed home rule with a marked degree of indifference.

The government intended to introduce their Home Rule Bill before Easter 1912. In the event, it was not brought in until after the recess, thus enabling the Conservatives to hold a massive demonstration at Belfast even before parliament had seen the measure. On Easter Tuesday, 9 April 1912, the Conservative party gave notice of its intention to play the orange card for all it was worth: at the Agricultural Society's showgrounds at Balmoral there

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[1] Memories, pp. 197-9.

[2] Long's organisation seems to have been the first to use this adventurous form of propaganda. See Patrick Buckland, Irish Unionism: Two: Ulster Unionism and the Origins of Northern Ireland, 1886-1922 (Dublin, 1973), p. 76.

[3] 29 H.C. Deb. ser.5 col. 815 (7 Aug. 1911).

took place a 'solemn occasion, no less than the wedding of Protestant Ulster with the Conservative and Unionist party, represented by Bonar Law and seventy English, Scottish and Welsh MPs.'[1] Although not looking to the exclusion of Ulster as a possible solution, Long nonetheless recognised the value of Ulster's position in the attack on home rule and he associated himself closely with the Protestant cause. Consequently, he was one of the principal dignitaries at Balmoral where, together with Bonar Law, Edward Carson and Lord Londonderry, he took the salute from 100,000 Ulster Volunteers.[2] Long made the somewhat provocative boast that if the government dared to 'put Lord Londonderry and Sir Edward Carson in the dock they will have to find one large enough to hold the whole Unionist party.'[3] From April 1912 onwards the Conservative party was committed to defend Ulster come what may, a commitment which was reaffirmed in the summer at another great demonstration against home rule, this time at Blenheim Palace. It was at this second demonstration that Bonar Law issued his famous challenge to the conventions of parliamentary democracy: 'I can imagine no length of resistance to which Ulster can go in which I should not be prepared to support them ...'[4]

By June the Bill had reached the committee stage. Long had spoken on the first and second readings, studiously

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[1]A.T.Q. Stewart, The Ulster Crisis, Resistance to Home Rule, 1912-1914 (London, 1967), p. 54.

[2]Hyde, Carson, p. 311.

[3]George Dangerfield, The Strange Death of Liberal England (London, 1935), p. 90.

[4]Blake, Unknown Prime Minister, p. 129.

avoiding all explicit threats of violence in Ulster. On 11 June Agar-Robartes, the Liberal Member for the St. Austell division of Cornwall, offered a first compromise by moving an amendment to exclude from the Bill the counties of Antrim, Armagh, Down and Londonderry. Many Conservatives were for acceptance, if only because not to accept appeared unreasonable, but Long could countenance no abandonment of Unionists in other parts of Ireland. By the time the party met at Londonderry House to consider its attitude to the amendment Long had already made his own position clear. On 4 June he told Bonar Law that 'as an Englishman I cannot assent to H.R. in any form ...'[1] And three days later he had written: 'If we waver and try "clever" tactics we shall disgust our friends and seriously weaken our own position ...'[2] Bonar Law thus knew that he risked alienating Long if the proffered compromise was accepted. As party leader he was again and again to find his freedom to accept Ulster's exclusion as a compromise solution circumscribed by Long's defence of the loyalist population throughout Ireland, but as the amendment had little chance of succeeding, and to reject it outright might have given an appearance of dismissing a possible peaceful solution, the opposition leaders decided to accept Agar-Robartes's proposal. For the sake of unity, Long agreed to toe the party line, conceding that

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[1] Long to Bonar Law, 4 June 1912, B.L.P., 26/4/7.
[2] Long to Bonar Law, 7 June 1912, ibid., 26/4/12.

acceptance was good politics if nothing else.

The defeat of the amendment, on 18 June, was entirely expected; it was also a victory for the view that the Southern Unionists must not be sacrificed. Opposition support for the Agar-Robartes amendment was not, as has recently been suggested, 'the point at which the British Unionists tacitly conceded the principle of Home Rule, by concentrating on Ulster.'[1] The Conservative party supported the amendment as a matter of tactics, knowing full well that it could not succeed. Unity of support for a compromise based on Ulster exclusion - and only a four county Ulster at that - was forthcoming only because the compromise could not possibly succeed. Tactically, the Unionists could use the amendment to drive a wedge between the more conciliatory Liberal MPs and their Nationalist allies; but to pass the Commons the amendment would have required a massive Liberal backbench revolt which was clearly not on the cards. With the defeat of the amendment a foregone conclusion, the Unionists had much to gain by supporting it, nothing to lose. They created the impression of supporting a compromise without actually doing so, and they forced Asquith to make plain his government's hostility to any reasonable settlement for Ulster. The charge of foolhardy intransigence now rebounded against the government. Conservative endorsement of the Agar-Robartes amendment, then, was a

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[1]Jalland, The Liberals and Ireland, p. 94.

purely tactical device, not a breach of faith with the Southern Unionists.

Whilst the Ulster leaders spent the late summer laying plans for the binding oath of resistance to home rule which was to become known as the Ulster Covenant, Long decided to take the campaign to the Empire. Between 8 August and 19 October 1912 he took the by now sophisticated and well-organised anti-home rule propaganda to Canada, accompanied by his wife and two friends, Sir George Armstrong and Major A.C. Morrison-Bell. It was Morrison-Bell, Conservative MP for Honiton, who organised the trip and made all the arrangements for Long's speaking tour. He was a good choice, having spent six years in Canada, during which time he had travelled extensively and made contacts throughout the country.[1]

Long's intention was to provoke disquiet over home rule amongst the governments and peoples of the Dominions. Shortly before he set sail at Liverpool on the "Adriatic", Long told the newspapers that he saw himself as an 'Imperial Missionary',[2] and the tour was designed to discredit the Home Rule Bill by playing on the theme of

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[1]Draft of an unpublished autobiography by Sir A.C. Morrison-Bell, 'A Journey with Maps, A Back-Bencher's Story' (House of Lords Record Office, Hist. Coll. 193), Chap. 5, p. 1.

[2]Daily Telegraph, 9 Aug. 1912.

imperial fragmentation. As The Times pointed out:

> It only needs a little more knowledge and consideration of the actual facts to make the Home Rule Bill even more discredited in Canada than even in England.... It is a difficult and delicate matter to carry what may appear to be only our domestic politics into the Dominions.[1]

Long arrived in Winnipeg on 26 August and gave his first speech on Canadian soil the following day at the Manitoba Hall. Predictably enough, the speech centred on the argument that home rule would loosen the bonds of Empire and appealed to the 'Citizens of the Empire' to 'look forward with confidence and a willingness to share its burdens.'[2]

The tour took Long from coast to coast, with speeches, all more or less the same in content and all on the same theme, in all the major cities, some to invited audiences, some to mass meetings. In many places he was the guest of the local Canada Club, giving his speeches at luncheon meetings held in his honour. This gave rise to some criticism, for it was an unwritten rule of the clubs that political questions would not be discussed in a partisan spirit by guests.[3] The tour was carefully stage-managed

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[1] The Times, 12 Aug. 1912.

[2] Winnipeg Telegram, 28 Aug. 1912.

[3] The Victoria Daily Times of 14 Sept. 1912, for example, accused Long of having 'flagrantly violated this tradition' during an address at the Canada Club of Vancouver on the previous day. Morrison-Bell evidently had reservations about the demagogic tone of many of Long's speeches, for he later wrote: 'One of the difficulties I had with Mr. Long

to culminate in two speeches delivered in Toronto on 27 September, the day before the signing of the Ulster Covenant in Belfast. In this way, Long's speeches were guaranteed pride of place in the Canadian newspapers on the 28th and then the activities of the Ulstermen would take the headlines over the next few days.

On the eve of 'Ulster Day' Long addressed two meetings in Toronto, one at the Massey Hall and one at the Victoria Hall; he received an ovation at both venues. The emotions of the crowd were deliberately whipped up to a frenzy for the benefit of the attending reporters. Thousands of Union Jacks had been distributed in advance amongst the audience, and a party of Orangemen demonstrated in Long's support outside both meetings, regaling the audience with a noisy rendition of "Protestant Boys" played by their fife and drum bands. As on other occasions, Long's speeches focused on the theme of Empire unity, and he came close to endorsing the threatened use of force in Ireland:

> No man contemplates the prospect of armed resistance with more regret than I should feel, but I am here to say I know what Ulster believes to be its duty, and for my part I think Ulster is right in its determination

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was to steer him off the political meetings he was being asked to address.... I knew ... that if a British Ex-Cabinet Minister began making political speeches it would cause an awful shindy in the Dominion.... Mr. Long was boiling to let fly, which is just what the Orangemen wanted.... What the authorities at Ottawa thought of it, I don't know.' Morrison-Bell, 'A Back-Bencher's Story', Chap. 12, pp. 3-4.

never to sell its birthright.[1]

A resolution condemning the Home Rule Bill was unanimously passed at the end of each meeting amidst much cheering and shouting. Long recorded in his diary that the occasion was 'one of the most successful demonstrations ... ever witnessed',[2] and he described the scene to Lady Londonderry as 'one never to be forgotten. The whole audience rose and cheered for a long time and everybody waved small Union jacks in the air, it was a most moving spectacle.'[3] The event served as an imperial publicity stunt on Ulster's behalf, exploiting Dominion fears over dismemberment of the Empire. Interestingly, Long made no mention of the cause of the Southern Irish Unionists.

And so, after several more meetings of the same kind, the tour ended, with Long returning on the "Celtic", amongst whose passengers, by a strange coincidence, was William Redmond. At just after eight o'clock on the evening of 19 October Long set foot once more in England, disembarking at Prince's landing stage, Liverpool, where he described his tour to waiting reporters as 'Splendid, the very best in the world, and I never felt fitter in my life.'[4] Altogether, he had travelled nearly 14,000

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[1] Toronto Daily News, 28 Sept. 1912.

[2] Long's diary, 27 Sept. 1912, W.L.P., WRO 947/473.

[3] Long to Lady Londonderry, 29 Sept. 1912, L.L.P., D/Lo/C 666(216).

[4] Morning Post, 19 Oct. 1912.

miles; the 'Imperial Mission' had been a marked success.

Long returned to a House of Commons where tempers were already running high. On 13 November Sir William Bull called Asquith a 'traitor', refused to withdraw the expression, and stalked out of the chamber to cries of 'Civil war, Civil war'.[1] When the House reassembled an hour later Ronald McNeill, an intemperate Ulster Unionist, added to the breakdown in legislative discipline by hurling a copy of the orders at Winston Churchill. Things quietened down over the Christmas recess and early in the new year the Bill went to the Lords. As expected, the Lords threw it out by an overwhelming majority at the end of January, and for a while the initiative passed from parliament to the Ulstermen, who laid careful plans for the setting up of a provisional government and organised military resistance. In Britain the U.D.L. campaign ground inexorably on.

Long's hopes lay still in a general election. On 12 March 1913 he made a blistering attack on the government in the Commons:

> You know as well as we that you dare not risk submitting your Bill to the country, because you know that the same fate would overtake it that overtook both its predecessors.

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[1]Bull was feted as a hero for his parliamentary asperity when, that evening, he attended a Unionist reception given by Lord and Lady Farquhar at the Royal Opera House. The reception marked the beginning of the Conservative party's annual conference.

> ... the Home Rule Bill ... gravely imperils the Union ... and yet you decline to let ... the people ... approve or disapprove of your action. You deny to our people the most elementary rights of citizenship, and ... you have done nothing to heal sores or to bring together combatants. You have done all in your power to add to bitterness and ... you have brought nothing but opposition and enmity.... I believe, as firmly as I have ever believed anything in my life, that if the Government, blind to facts and deaf to arguments, persist in their mistaken course, the result will be disastrous to the country, and shame ... and humiliation for themselves.[1]

By the early summer the Ulster Volunteer Force had been drilled and Lord Willoughby de Broke had set up a 'British League for the Support of Ulster and the Union' to rival Long's own U.D.L. Long kept his own organisation separate and continued to lay emphasis on defence of the Union rather than special treatment for Ulster. He was convinced by what had happened to both of Gladstone's Home Rule Bills that the Union could be preserved if Asquith could only be forced to a dissolution.

But the King, understandably worried at the prospect of civil war, now took a hand, and Asquith found himself obliged to sound out the opposition as to the lines of possible compromise. During the autumn tentative discussions between the parties took place, and it soon emerged that Bonar Law and Carson were quite ready to play off exclusion of Ulster against home rule for the rest of

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[1] 50 H.C. Deb. ser.5 cols. 255-66.

Ireland. But Long would have none of this. On 3 October Lord Lansdowne expressed fears that the Conservative party was beginning to appear intolerant and unreasonable over home rule. He thought that if the government offered the exclusion of Ulster, continued opposition would seem obstructive and lose any support in the country which the U.D.L. campaign might have won.[1]

This possibility did not worry Long. He believed that the party's best course was simple. It was safe to bet that Asquith would not concede exclusion for Ulster with no time limit and no other qualfications; it was also safe to bet that Ulster would not, without coercion, accept less. The party, therefore, merely had to state these as its minimum terms, thus bringing all conversations with the government to an end and ensuring that, if a general election followed, there could be no accusations of obstruction. Long believed that Bonar Law should explicitly state the minimum terms he would accept, making sure that they would be unacceptable to the government, and stick to them. The party could not then be represented as unreasonable - its terms would be public knowledge. Nor would its chances of electoral victory be jeopardised. Asquith would be faced with two stark alternatives: either to concede a dissolution or to use the Army to force home rule on a recalcitrant Ulster. Long believed that the prime minister's nerve

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[1]See Lansdowne to Long, 3 Oct. 1913, L.P., Add. MS. 62403.

would break, that he would choose an election before ordering the Army into Ulster, and that the Conservatives would return to power on a wave of anti-home rule hysteria.

It is this line of thinking which explains Long's intransigence throughout the crisis,[1] and to prevent Bonar Law from acquiescing in Liberal overtures he was quite prepared to threaten the unity of the party. On 5 October Long told Bonar Law bluntly: 'Personally I do not believe in a Conference, except after an Election, or on condition that Bill is withdrawn.'[2] When Bonar Law met Asquith on 14 October at Sir Max Aitken's country house at Cherkley, near Leatherhead, he knew that he could accept no compromise without taking on the formidable section of the party on whose support Long could rely. Just as Liberal dependence on Redmond's votes in parliament made it impossible for Asquith to offer permanent exclusion of a nine, or even a six, county Ulster, so Bonar Law could offer no more than his party would accept. Long also made the point that even if a satisfactory compromise involving Ulster exclusion could be reached between the two main parties, Redmond would promptly turn the government out of office, leaving the home rule problem no nearer solution. By talking to the Liberals Bonar Law ran the risk of splitting his own party when there was not even the remotest possibility that the

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[1] A clear exposition of this line of thought can be found in a letter which Long wrote to Lord Lansdowne on 29 May 1914, a copy of which can be found in L.P., Add. MS. 62403.

[2] Long to Bonar Law, 5 Oct. 1913, B.L.P., 30/3/7.

crisis could be resolved.

The two party leaders met again on 6 November, but the discussions made no headway. On the following day Long hinted at the possibility of trouble on the backbenches by saying that the result of any compromise 'would be absolutely fatal to our Party'.[1] Although making the usual protestations of loyalty, Long bombarded Bonar Law with strong letters deprecating any suggestion of retreat. By 9 November the threat to party unity was unequivocal:

> I can't hide from myself the fact that if we come to any arrangement with the Gov. we shall run grave risks of splitting, even of smashing our Party.... The general view seems to be "Give no quarter and drive them out".... I feel myself that ... if this Gov. try to go on we ought to make business in the House impossible and so drive them to the country.[2]

Long's greatest worry was that Bonar Law would be brow-beaten by the Government into accepting a compromise which was not in the party's best interests. This worry was naturally exaggerated by the fact that he was not involved personally in the discussions. As Lord Crawford, who had resigned as Unionist chief whip and succeeded to the Lords on the death of his father earlier in the year, explained to Lady Wantage:

> Our party is distrustful of the negotiating capacity of our leaders - that is really the basis of our nervousness - and I am not surprised.... Our mandarins

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[1]Long to Bonar Law, 7 Nov. 1913, B.L.P., 30/4/11 (Long's underlining).

[2]Long to Bonar Law, 9 Nov. 1913, ibid., 30/4/18.

> from one cause or another do not appreciate the immense value of the perspective obtained by an informed and unfettered conference of allies ...[1]

To what extent was Bonar Law's response determined by anxiety over Long's potential opposition? There can be no doubt that the Conservative leader was worried by the prospect of backbench discontent, possibly led by Long. 1886 was a date no party leader could forget. Already, on 7 November Bonar Law had felt obliged to tell Long that he hoped personally that 'the Nationalists will not agree'[2] to the exclusion of a six county Ulster, and on the 8th he reassured Long that 'so far we are committed to nothing, and every step must be taken with the utmost caution.'[3] Long would be satisfied with nothing less than a refusal by Bonar Law and Lansdowne to talk to the Liberal leaders at all. He realised only too well that his strongest card in swaying the two Conservative leaders from readiness to negotiate was the implicit threat of leading a revolt along the lines of Joseph Chamberlain's revolt against Gladstone on the occasion of the first Home Rule Bill. His letters could leave Bonar Law in no doubt that he was at least contemplating rebellion. A memorandum of 20 November 1913 is typical: any compromise, Long promised, would be

> followed by a schism, even greater and more deep-seated

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[1] Crawford to Lady Wantage, 12 Dec. 1913, The Crawford Papers, p. 320.

[2] Bonar Law to Long, copy, 7 Nov. 1913, B.L.P., 33/6/94.

[3] Bonar Law to Long, copy, 8 Nov. 1913, ibid., 33/6/96.

than that which occurred at the time of the passing of the Parliament Act... I think the facts - and I believe them to be facts - ought to be in our minds before any decision is arrived at.... I believe ... the Government and the Nationalists have flouted and insulted Ulster .... the only thing to do is to fight them in parliament and out, to make their government of the country an impossibility, and to compel them to face the electors ...[1]

This memorandum brought a swift reaction, for on the next day Bonar Law wrote to reassure Long that there would be full consultation before any decision and that he entirely concurred in the views expressed.[2]

By meeting Asquith for the last time on 10 December Bonar Law was simply going through the motions. The victim of his own weak leadership and Long's powerbase within the party, Bonar Law was in no position to accept any compromise, even if Asquith had been able to offer one. Severely hampered in his freedom of manoeuvre, Bonar Law could neither offer nor accept concession. He ran the risk of civil war in Ireland not because he wanted to for the sake of Ulster, but because he had to for the sake of party unity.

It was still not impossible that Long might take the party leadership for himself; his support amongst the party rank and file remained intact, and steadfast opposition to home rule was guaranteed the support of a large group of Tory MPs. As well as risking party unity

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[1]Memorandum by Long, 20 Nov. 1913, B.L.P., 30/4/46; L.P., Add. MS. 62416.

[2]See Bonar Law to Long, copy, 21 Nov. 1913, B.L.P., 33/6/99.

by talking to the government, Bonar Law also risked his own precarious position. Long would only very reluctantly have accepted permanent exclusion of Ulster as the answer. This was for him a 'clumsy expedient at the best', for he had no desire at this stage to abandon the Loyalists in the south in the interests of an overall settlement.[1]

By the end of the year Long was trying to push Bonar Law into making a final break with the idea of compromise. Instead, he proposed that Bonar Law should issue a clear ultimatum to the government that negotiations could only proceed if Asquith abnegated all intention of forcing the Home Rule Bill through parliament at the end of the Lords' two year delaying period. Unless Law could secure such an undertaking, Long argued, the party should entertain no further thoughts of compromise.[2] Needless to say, Long proposed that an ultimatum be issued knowing full well that it had not the slightest chance of being accepted by the Liberals. Rather, it would put an end once and for all to the talk of a negotiated settlement involving both parties. Clearly, the negotiations could get nowhere: Asquith was held in check by his pledges to Redmond, Bonar Law by his own followers, and the talks petered out early in January 1914. With undisguised pleasure, Long told his leader on 13 January: 'I heard today indirectly that you are to announce on the 15th the

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[1]Memorandum by Long, 20 Nov. 1913, B.L.P., 30/4/46; L.P., Add. MS. 62416.

[2]Memorandum by Long, 31 Dec. 1913, B.L.P., 31/1/68.

breakdown of the negotiations. I confess I am very glad.'[1] And so, at Bristol, on 15 January, Bonar Law announced that the negotiations had collapsed.

The home rule crisis now looked set to erupt in violence. Not without reason had Lord Lansdowne greeted the new year with the remark, 'I don't like the looks of 1914 a bit!'[2] Many Unionists, encouraged by Bonar Law's reiterated pledges to support Ulster, began to talk of using armed force to defeat the Bill. Already, the 'British League for the Support of Ulster and the Union' had enrolled 10,000 members 'mostly for the purpose of going over to Ulster to join the volunteers if it came to actual fighting',[3] and Lord Milner was expressing an interest in doing something more at home. On 6 January Lord Willoughby de Broke, always a passionate enthusiast for the extreme course in any political question, wrote to Milner to ask for his support. The letter makes the League's position quite clear: 'The object of this League is to ... arm all Unionists on this side of the water who wish to fight with the Ulstermen ...'[4] In

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[1]Long to Bonar Law, 13 Jan. 1914. B.L.P., 31/2/37.

[2]Lansdowne to Long, 30 Dec. 1913, W.L.P., WRO 947/441.

[3]Stewart, The Ulster Crisis, p. 132.

[4]Willoughby de Broke to Milner, 6 Jan. 1914, M.P., MS. Eng. Hist. c.689, fos. 2-4.

response to a letter from Leo Amery on 10 January Milner had taken up the idea of adapting the Ulster Covenant to British circumstances by persuading leading men to sign a pledge of loyalty to the Union, a pledge which soon became known as the British Covenant.

Meanwhile, the Conservative party was considering the possibility of amending the annual Army Act so as to prevent British forces being used to implement home rule in Ulster, an extreme course which, Long and his supporters argued, was fully justified by the Liberals' repeated abuse of the constitution.[1] After much heated debate the party decided to drop this line of attack as it could not in itself solve the crisis and was at best a delaying tactic.

By February Milner's plans for a British Covenant were well advanced, but he lacked an organisation capable of appealing to British public opinion. The 'British League for the Support of Ulster and the Union', with offices at 25 Ryder Street, St. James's, could provide such an organisation and Milner's original plan was to subvert Willoughby de Broke's League for his own purposes. Leo Amery had adumbrated the plan to Lord Robert Cecil on 16 January:

> The general scheme is that Willoughby de Broke's committee should be strengthened and transformed by the accession of a number of influential people and proceed to devote itself to the organisation of this

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[1]See Long to Bonar Law, 6 Feb. 1914, B.L.P., 31/3/17.

> matter, using its 450 agents for that purpose and for the time being relegating its more martial aspect to the background.[1]

The original intention was to launch the Covenant at the Albert Hall at the beginning of February and to have the collection of signatures completed by the beginning of April at the latest, thus presenting Asquith with a huge protest before the Home Rule Bill could be passed.

But Lord Willoughby de Broke was a dangerous political ally, lacking credibility in the higher echelons of the Conservative party and burdened by a reputation for poor judgement and fatuous pronouncements. The U.D.L., on the other hand, was ideal for Milner's purpose: it had several years campaigning experience in the English constituencies, it had offices in central London and generous funds, and through Long it had access to the very heart of Westminster politics. The decision to use Long's organisation rather than Willoughby de Broke's forced Milner to set his timetable back by a month or more.

The idea of a British Covenant was mooted to the U.D.L. on 19 February, with the result that a sub-committee, under Long's chairmanship, was appointed to initiate the movement.[2] To sign the pledge meant a personal commitment to participate in actual fighting against the armed

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[1] Amery to Lord Robert Cecil, 16 Jan. 1914, Cecil of Chelwood papers, Add. MS. 51072; see also The Leo Amery Diaries: Volume One: 1896-1929 (London, 1980), entries for 12 and 13 Jan. 1914 in which Amery gives details of early approaches to Willoughby de Broke's League.

[2] See Memories, pp. 201-6, for Long's own account of his involvement with the British Covenant.

forces of the Crown should the Home Rule Bill be imposed on Ulster. Each signatory was required solemnly to declare that he would take any step 'to prevent the armed forces ... being used to deprive the people of Ulster of their rights as citizens of the United Kingdom.'[1] Many sympathisers disliked this unequivocal commitment to armed force, and Milner received countless refusals.[2] Amongst those who did sign many expressed misgivings as to the wisdom of including such a commitment in the oath. Even as staunch a Unionist as A.V. Dicey told Milner of 'the difficulty ... wh. I should personally feel as to subscribing towards resistance by arms' and urged that the wording be changed so as to avoid any declaration which was 'equivalent to rebellion.'[3]

There were, however, plenty of eminent men who had no such qualms about signing a declaration of intended rebellion: Henry Wace, the Dean of Canterbury, subscribed readily enough,[4] as did the Archdeacon of Ely, William Cunningham, a right-wing intellectual of some stature

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[1]Copies of the British Covenant, many duly signed, can be found in M.P., MS. Eng. Hist. c.689.

[2]Many of Milner's closest supporters pointed out the folly of alienating leading men who, though sympathetic to the cause, could countenance no commitment to armed force. When Lord Robert Cecil refused to sign unless the wording was changed Leo Amery suggested abandoning the contentious final paragraph in favour of: '... if the Bill is forced through Parliament without the assent of the people I shall hold myself free to take (or justified in taking) any action which may be effective to prevent the coercion of Ulster.' (See Amery to Cecil, 23 Jan. 1914, Cecil of Chelwood papers, Add. MS. 51072.) Rather than water down the Covenant, Milner preferred to accept the refusals.

[3]Dicey to Milner, 1 Mar. 1914, M.P., MS. Eng. Hist. c.689, fos. 103-4

[4]Ibid., fos. 119-21.

whose studies of economics and politics turned on the weighty objective of strengthening and preserving the nation-state as the loftiest expression of historical evolution.[1]

Long's attitude to the British Covenant was cautious: he was pleased to allow Milner to use the offices of the U.D.L. at 25 Victoria Street, Westminster, and he took an active part in soliciting support, but he did not sign the pledge himself. Harold Cox, the editor of the Edinburgh Review, was approached by Long but refused to sign because of the controversial final paragraph threatening direct action against the Army.[2] And Archibald Salvidge of Liverpool, whose name appeared in the press amongst the original signatories, only signed in response to a request by Long.[3] The incipient League of British Covenanters even received a donation of £1,000 from Long on 24 February.[4] Yet Long did not lend his name to a declaration which appeared in the Morning Post on 27 February pledging the new League to fight side by side with the Ulstermen. Nor did he let his name appear amongst the signatories to the Covenant. He still did not believe that there would be any fighting in Ulster and he still hoped to force the government to the polls. Anxious not

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[1]Bernard Semmel, Imperialism and Social Reform (London, 1960), p. 188.

[2]See Cox to Long, 21 Feb. 1914, M.P., MS. Milner dep. 41, fos. 12-3.

[3]See Long to Milner, 24 Feb. 1914, ibid., MS. Eng. Hist. c. 689, fos, 38-40.

[4]Ibid.

to turn his back on a parliamentary solution, Long would not lend his name publicly to a declaration of intended force, but he would assist, even encourage, others to do so.

The British Covenant appeared in the newspapers on 3 March. Not one of the appended signatures belonged to a member of the House of Commons. Even Leo Amery, Conservative MP for South Birmingham and Milner's chief lieutenant, kept his name out of the headlines. Professor Dicey, regretting the good sense of Conservative MPs, greeted publication in characteristically dramatic style: 'Every Unionist', Dicey told Milner,

> ought ... whether in Parliament or out of Parliament, to sign, and to sign quickly. The absence of any name will assuredly be noted. The Unionists who do not sign will be counted and treated as dissenting.... Each and all and every man should be induced to rally round this appeal.... I am sure it is now or never for the Union.[1]

But Milner's insistence on including in the pledge a threat to challenge the British Army by force made it impossible for Unionist politicians to sign. An unnecessary trenchancy in the choice of phrasing thus ensured that the British Covenant was denied the overt public support of its most influential sympathisers, the Conservative front bench.

The initial response was promising and on 6 March Long

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[1]Dicey to Milner, 3 Mar. 1914, ibid., MS. Milner dep. 41, fo. 31.

reported to Sir Edward Carson that

> ... public opinion is now really aroused in the country. There is evidence of this in the rush to sign the Covenant - we are really almost overpowered. I believe people realise now, as they have never done before, the gross injustice to the Unionists of Ireland, are indignant at the proposed betrayal, and will support us in our action.[1]

Yet the extent to which Long still expected a political solution is evident from his concluding remark: 'My own conviction is that if no arrangement is arrived at, the Government will try to force their Bill through, and they will find their position in the House of Commons impossible.'[2] Towards the end of the month he took a hand in soliciting press support for the Ulstermen's cause. At a luncheon given by George Gibbs, Conservative MP for Bristol West, Long and Milner met the editors of all the leading London Tory papers, except The Times, and managed to get a unanimous pledge of support for any action which Carson might feel obliged to take. On 25 March the same unanimity was expressed at another luncheon given by Gibbs to the lobby correspondents.[3]

Encouraged by the initial success of the Covenant, Milner

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[1]Long to Carson, 6 Mar. 1914, quoted in Ian Colvin, The Life of Lord Carson, 3 Vols. (London, 1932-36), 2, 290-1.

[2]Ibid.

[3]See Long to Carson, 26 Mar. 1914, quoted ibid., pp. 352-3. George Gibbs was prominent amongst Long's backbench supporters. He was married to Long's eldest daughter, Victoria, and sat for Bristol West from 1906 to 1928. He later became a Conservative chief whip in the Commons and had a brief spell in 1917 as Long's P.P.S. at the Colonial Office. In 1928 he was created Baron Wraxall.

and Long decided to put the League of British Covenanters on a more permanent footing, and at a meeting held on 7 April at Caxton Hall, Westminster, Long was elected chairman, Milner vice-chairman. Although the U.D.L. became increasingly involved in the League's affairs, Long kept it running as a separate and distinct organisation. Because of his position as chairman of both organisations and because of Milner's dependence on U.D.L. goodwill, Long enjoyed general control over the administration of the Covenant. Philip Cambray, the U.D.L.'s energetic secretary, was also placed in charge of the League's business, thus cementing Long's control.

It fell to the U.D.L. to collect signatures, sending out certificates and keeping a record of all the names and addresses, and local committees of Covenanters were set up wherever there was enough support. Long hoped to get at least one person to act as a representative in each locality. These representatives were known as 'correspondents' - their function being to correspond with Long in London on all matters relating to the Covenant in their particular area and to obtain further signatures. From May onwards the League produced a monthly journal. Written in popular style and known as The Covenanter, it contained contributions from Rudyard Kipling and Leo Amery, as well as more pedestrian pieces from Milner, Carson and Long. Local 'correspondents' were responsible for distribution and for increasing circulation; they were

also expected to organise local appeals to assist the funding of the Ulster Volunteers.[1] By the end of July, when the campaign was closed down, U.D.L. headquarters had received the signatures of some 831,000 men and well over 500,000 women.[2]

Thus, the U.D.L. moved in 1914 much closer than ever before towards support of Ulster Unionism as something quite separate from Irish Unionism. Its propaganda campaign had previously been directed against any form of home rule. Now it tapped the strength of Carson's crusade to attack the Liberals where they were weakest. But Long was still sensitive to the predicament of the Southern loyalists. In the councils of the Conservative party he still insisted on 'no compromise', even if Ulster could be safeguarded. Long's sympathy with Ulster's cause was, in any case, genuine; but satisfactory exclusion of Ulster was not his main objective. Bonar Law and Carson gradually moved traditional Unionism away from the defence of all Ireland towards the defence of just Ulster. Long did not agree with this policy. Instead, he seized upon the Ulster campaign as the best weapon which could be trained at home rule for any part of Ireland.

There is nothing to suggest that the British Covenant altered Asquith's course in the slightest - the Curragh

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[1] A copy of the League's circular letter explaining its organisational structure to prospective 'correspondents' can be found in M.P., MS. Milner dep. 41, fos. 268-9. It is undated and is signed by both Long and Milner.

[2] Memories, p. 203; Stewart, The Ulster Crisis, p. 135, gives the total figure as 'nearly two million'.

'mutiny' and the Larne gun-running had a much greater influence on the government - and despite the fierceness of their tone it is difficult to take the Covenanters at their word. The picture of Professor Dicey and like-minded dons, together with Rudyard Kipling and Sir Edward Elgar, taking themselves across to Ulster to assist in the shooting down of British soldiers acting on the instructions of the lawfully elected government is a fanciful one indeed. As an expression of the intensity of feeling which the home rule controversy aroused the British Covenant is significant. But as a practical step to defeat the Bill it was irrelevant.

In a sense there was something very conventional about the British Covenant. It was Willoughby de Broke and his followers who were the real extremists over the question of resistance to home rule. They, after all, were engaged in the recruitment, training and arming of men for the express purpose of challenging the Army in Ulster. The Covenant, by comparison, was merely a rhetorical declaration, a petition of protest rather than a plan of action. By first of all subverting Willoughby de Broke's League, then deserting it and stealing the limelight from its more martial aspect, the Covenanters brought opposition to home rule back within the accepted traditions of organised protest. A gesture of defiance, however strongly worded, might be tolerated; the mustering of a private army by a highly volatile fanatic went beyond the

accepted confines of political conduct. Whilst Willoughby de Broke took deliberate steps to make the use of force in Ulster a real possibility, Milner and Long used the Covenant as a prop with which to sustain the political pressure which the Conservative party was exerting on the government.[1]

The real struggle was fought out not in the Ulster crusade of Sir Edward Carson, nor in the rhetoric of the various anti-home rule campaigns in which Long played such an important part, but amongst the politicians at Westminster. The British Covenant, U.D.L. propaganda, Carson's exhibitions of mass hysteria in Ulster, the pretend soldiering of the Ulster Volunteers, the adventures of the gun-runners - all provide no more than a colourful and melodramatic backcloth to the manoeuvres of Britain's leading politicians.

On 9 March Asquith announced his 'final' concession: the Protestant counties of Ulster would be allowed to decide by plebiscite to exclude themselves from the Act's jurisdiction, but only for six years. Bonar Law dismissed the offer out of hand. Five days later Winston Churchill

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[1] In fact, even the idea of a British Covenant was decidedly unoriginal. Not only did it draw on the Ulster Covenant, but Willoughby de Broke's 'League for the Support of Ulster and the Union' had already initiated its own 'Call for Service' a full six weeks before Milner began to take an interest. The government, it had asserted, 'have it in their power to save our King and Country from this supreme calamity by advising His Majesty to dissolve Parliament.... But if they do proceed ... then we call on all our able-bodied fellow-countrymen ... to enrol themselves and prepare to reinforce the ranks of the men who are going to risk their lives for the integrity of the Empire....' Morning Post, 18 Nov. 1913.

made his deliberately provocative speech at Bradford about 'worse things than bloodshed even on an extended scale'. Then, on 18 March 1914, the cabinet made its biggest mistake so far: it ordered troops to move to reinforce arms depots in Ulster, so precipitating what has come to be known as the Curragh 'mutiny'. By the morning of the 21st the newspapers were full of the story, and on the next day Asquith confided to Venetia Stanley that any order to march would result in a strike by 'about half the officers in the Army - the Navy is more uncertain.'[1] Long believed that establishing the existence of a government plot to coerce Ulster mattered little. What really mattered was for the Conservative party to use the episode to embarrass the government, portray Asquith as devious and deceitful, and frighten the electors. He egged Bonar Law on to take the strongest line and make the most of the opportunity provided by the 'gallant Gough', describing the affair as '...the most wonderful combination of circumstances and coincidences that has ever been told, even in fiction.'[2] Long was well content with Bonar Law's exploitation of the matter in the House of Commons.[3] By the end of the month Asquith had managed to restore a semblance of stability by taking over the War Office himself, but he was completely unable to come to any

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[1]H.H. Asquith, Letters to Venetia Stanley, ed. Michael and Eleanor Brock (Oxford, 1982), p. 59.

[2]Memorandum by Long, 27 Mar. 1914, B.L.P., 39/2/22.

[3]See Long to Bonar Law, 23 Mar., 22 Apr., and 26 Apr. 1914, ibid., 32/1/53, 32/2/50 and 32/2/55 respectively.

arrangement with Bonar Law, for the Conservative party was now officially committed to the policy of insisting on permanent exclusion for Ulster as a minimum starting point for further negotiations.

Pressure on Asquith to find a solution was increased by the success of the Larne gun-running on the night of 24 to 25 April. The Ulster Volunteers now had over 24,000 rifles with which to play at soldiers. There can be little doubt that money for the purchase of some of these rifles was channelled through the U.D.L. and the League of British Covenanters. Milner and Long both had tens of thousands of pounds at their disposal for fighting home rule, and neither man made any secret of his support for the arming of the Ulstermen.[1] Their reasons, however, were rather different: Long viewed the rifles solely as a deterrent, Milner conceived that they might actually be used. The fact that Ulster was now armed, and organised to fight, effectively precluded coercion as a government option - a point which leading Unionist politicians like Long and Bonar Law grasped readily.

Long knew that the party would wish to hold out for

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[1]Waldorf Astor, for example, gave Milner £30,000; Lord Rothschild, Lord Iveagh and the Duke of Bedford subscribed £10,000 each; and at the end of March Rudyard Kipling donated £30,000. Donations of such large sums are adequate testimony to the seriousness with which such men regarded the issue. See A.M. Gollin, Proconsul in Politics, a Study of Lord Milner (London, 1964), p. 188; Sir John Evelyn Wrench, Alfred, Lord Milner (London, 1958), p. 287.

the 'clean cut' - the automatic and permanent exclusion of nine counties - even if Carson was prepared to take a six county Ulster. He also knew that the Nationalists could never accept the 'clean cut' as a fair price to pay for home rule in the remainder of Ireland. This, Long reasoned, would leave Asquith with only one option, to fight a general election on the issue. All the Conservative party had to do was stand firm: soon it would have the chance of returning to office. It is this line of reasoning which explains the fact that when Asquith met Carson and Bonar Law on 5 May and agreed to a separate Amending Bill to exclude Ulster, the party was less than satisfied. Many Tory MPs agreed with Long that there was no need to abandon the Unionists in the twenty-six counties and that the government was beaten; Asquith was offering exclusion for Ulster only because he was in a corner. Bonar Law was in an unenviable position, threatened from all sides from within his own party. Long's potential factiousness was merely the most menacing of the threats to unity emanating from Bonar Law's own front bench, from the backbenches, and from the House of Lords.

When Lord Willoughby de Broke had announced the formation of the 'League for the Support of Ulster and the Union' in

the London newspapers on 27 March 1913 he had received the support of one hundred peers and one hundred and twenty MPs.[1] Many of these peers later became the nucleus of a 'diehard' movement in the Lords which would countenance no compromise over home rule. By late 1913 some of the Tory peers were becoming particularly obstructive. Never a man to subordinate his political passions to the rigours of party discipline, Willoughby de Broke set about organising resistance in the upper House. The 'diehard' movement of 1911 was speedily resurrected, and early in 1914 he decided to arrange for a 'no compromise' pledge to be signed by the Tory peers.

Lord Ampthill was all for the suggestion and agreed readily on 4 January, writing of compromise as a policy both 'fatuous and fatal'.[2] On the following day, the Earl of Stanhope, firmly in favour of canvassing 'our brother peers', redrafted Willoughby de Broke's proposed letter.[3] Lord Milner was invited to join the new 'diehard' committee, but declined, writing to say that he would attend meetings as a 'sympathetic outsider' only.[4] Lord Leconfield was a keen supporter from the start, commenting that the party's official leaders were not to be trusted 'a yard', and by the end of the month Lords

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[1] Stewart, The Ulster Crisis, p. 73.

[2] Ampthill to Willoughby de Broke, 4 Jan. 1914, W.B.P., WB/7/1.

[3] Stanhope to Willoughby de Broke, 5 Jan. 1914, ibid., WB/7/2.

[4] Milner to Willoughby de Broke, 8 Jan. 1914, ibid., WB/7/3.

Peel and Saltoun had added their names to the campaign.[1]

Willoughby de Broke, Arran, Stanhope and Ampthill circulated their letter on 4 February 1914. It invited all members of the upper House, including the bishops, to pledge themselves to oppose any compromise at least until a general election. The letter argued that dissolution was an option that Asquith must use if he wished to avoid the stigma of provoking civil war, that to accept exclusion of Ulster was to accept home rule in principle, and that for any Unionist peer to acquiesce in a Home Rule Bill before a general election would be an act of betrayal.[2] The four peers' initiative clearly frightened the Conservative party leadership, for on the following day there was a secret meeting at Lansdowne House to discuss the situation. Bonar Law, Lansdowne, Long, Chamberlain, Carson and Londonderry all attended, as did a number of other prominent men in the party, and the meeting lasted nearly two hours. Later that day, 5 February, Lord Lansdowne told Willoughby de Broke that the party leaders had agreed to move an Irish amendment to the Address.[3] Stanhope wrote gleefully to his confederate: 'Whoo-hoop! Really the 4th party has done pretty well for a first attempt.'[4]

Accordingly, when parliament reassembled on 10 February

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[1]Leconfield to Willoughby de Broke, 12 Jan., Peel to Willoughby de Broke, 15 Jan., Saltoun to Willoughby de Broke, 16 Jan. 1914, ibid., WB/7/6, 8, and 10 respectively.

[2]For a copy of the letter see ibid., WB/8/5.

[3]Lansdowne to Willoughby de Broke, 5 Feb. 1914, ibid., WB/8/10.

[4]Stanhope to Willoughby de Broke, 5 Feb. 1914, ibid., WB/8/12.

Long followed the King's speech by moving an amendment to compel the government to submit home rule to an election. Although the amendment was defeated the following day, Asquith nonetheless indicated that he would shortly put forward proposals which the government hoped would lead to an agreement over Ulster. Long, in common with other Unionists, interpreted this as a minor victory: it looked as if Asquith, tacitly at least, had conceded that Ulster would ultimately have to be given special treatment, whatever the views of Redmond and the Nationalists. The response to the four peers' circular letter was mostly favourable. By the end of the month Willoughby de Broke had received unequivocal promises of support from more than thirty 'diehards' and many others expressed sympathy but were reluctant to take an independent line.[1] That Long had moved an amendment to the Address was in itself a direct concession to the 'diehards'. Haunted by the memory of the way in which the Halsbury Club had mutinied against Balfour in 1911, Bonar Law preferred to assuage 'diehard' sensibilities by permitting a useless gesture of defiance.

There was also considerable unease amongst backbench MPs. Sir William Bull presided over the weekly dinner

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[1]Between 6 and 25 Feb. 1914 the following peers all promised unequivocal support against any compromise: Abingdon, Bagot, Bathurst, Beaufort, Bessborough, Cairns, Calthorpe, Camden, Camoys, Clonbrock, Colville, Coventry, Dunally, Erne, Hill, Iveagh, Kensington, Kenyon, Lanesborough, Lauderdale, Lilford, Lovelace, Massy, Monck, Newcastle, Northumberland, St. John of Bletsoe, Sandwich, Scarborough, Sherborne, Sinclair, Somerset, Templemore, Vivian. Replies to the circular letter can be found in W.B.P., WB/8/13-93.

held at the Commons, and on Monday 16 February Long was the guest of honour. A large number of MPs expressed misgivings at Bonar Law's readiness to compromise, misgivings which were echoed by Bull from the chair. Afterwards, Bull handed Bonar Law a note signed by the Tory backbenchers to the effect that they were extremely dissatisfied with the course which their leader was pursuing. On the next day Bull confidently told Bonar Law that he could easily get another '50 or 60 signatures if you require them.' The extent of the dissaffection is plain from Bull's letter:

> I want you to believe that all the men are absolutely loyal to you ... but on the other hand they do feel that Asquith is absolutely unreliable and that he is merely playing with us.
>
> There was a plot on hand "to make Government impossible" on the opening day of the Session and but for the fact that you put up Walter Long, I believe it would have been carried out.[1]

Even more ominous were the views expressed by many of the party's most trusted and senior men. Lord Selborne was of the opinion that 'Asquith did not mean business and was only trying to create an atmosphere of compromise like that created by the King's death in 1910 with a view to profiting by it at our expense.'[2] In May 1914 he remarked percipiently that 'whether the party splits or

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[1] Bull to Bonar Law, copy, 17 Feb. 1914, Bu.P., 4/9.
[2] Selborne to Chamberlain, 9 Jan. 1914, A.C.P., AC 11/1/81.

not depends I think entirely on the manner in which we make ourselves a party to any arrangements for the avoidance of civil war.'[1] Selborne wrote a strong letter to Lord Lansdowne on 1 May, requesting that its contents be shown to Bonar Law:

> We should remain true to the principles for which we have contended throughout, opposition to Home Rule and the constitutional right of the electors to decide the question.... If the party thinks that we have given way on either of these principles I am very much afraid of the consequences.[2]

And Leo Amery expressed the same widespread view when he told Austen Chamberlain, also early in May 1914, that the real danger to the party was posed by the prospect of Asquith

> ... simply excluding Ulster and leaving an utterly unworkable and separatist Bill for the rest of Ireland. ... I doubt really if anything arises except the one question when can we get them out. And this can now only arise at the point where they have to make the attempt to coerce Ulster. I don't believe they can do it.... That will be their deathblow.[3]

And what of Chamberlain's opinion? As in so many things during his political career, Chamberlain thought that the solution was to be found in his father's old policies, namely alteration of the Act of Union so as to

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[1]Selborne to Chamberlain, 1 May 1914, ibid., AC 11/1/86.

[2]Selborne to Lansdowne, copy, 1 May 1914, ibid., AC 11/1/87.

[3]Amery to Chamberlain, 4 May 1914, ibid., AC 11/1/2.

set up provincial councils for the constituent parts of the United Kingdom. Adamant that he was not a 'funker or a scuttler' and that the Union was 'sacrosanct', Chamberlain, like Milner, wanted to move away from 'conservatism in the narrow sense' to federalism as the saviour of the Empire. The fact that federalism had no more appeal for the Irish Nationalists than the Union hardly entered into his calculations. Chamberlain supported negotiations with the government only because of the danger that 'the House of Commons and the Army will break ...'[1] Already convinced of the merits of federalism, he was hardly a fervent supporter of Bonar Law's line.

Lord Robert Cecil was in favour of an inter-party conference only because he believed there was no likelihood of agreement, thus forcing the government to back down,[2] and even Lord Lansdowne admitted privately to having reservations. As early as October 1913 he had confided to Chamberlain:

> To my mind ... the recent course of events has lately brought more and not less anxiety. So long as we were fighting for a general election we were on solid ground, but from the moment that the venue was changed and we began to talk about the exclusion of Ulster, we found ourselves in a quagmire.... I have always dreaded the entanglements of a conference ... the Ulster red herring is being dragged backwards and forwards across the track.[3]

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[1]Chamberlain to Willoughby de Broke, 23 Nov. 1913, W.B.P., WB/6/9 (Chamberlain's underlining).

[2]Cecil to Willoughby de Broke, 18 Sept. 1913, ibid., WB/6/3.

[3]Lansdowne to Chamberlain, 31 Oct. 1913, A.C.P., AC 11/1/47.

In other words, Bonar Law was very much out on his own in his desire to construct a compromise around exclusion of Ulster. Willoughby de Broke and the 'diehards' were expected to be obstreperous, their opposition a foregone conclusion. But even amongst the party's leading men Bonar Law was isolated. He had the support of Carson, but Carson's interests were not necessarily those of the Conservative party. Long was for forcing a general election, even by pushing Asquith to the brink of civil war; Chamberlain had put his faith in federalism and had no enthusiasm for Bonar Law's course; Lansdowne followed reluctantly. By May 1914, then, Bonar Law was struggling desperately to perform a complicated balancing act: he had to get the best terms for Ulster, and he had to keep his party together. The two were by no means compatible.

Long was amongst those who were not satisfied with Asquith's concession, on 5 May 1914, of an Amending Bill to exclude Ulster. Yet he was not in favour of Willoughby de Broke's 'diehard' campaign: he remembered only too well the trouble caused by the 'diehards' in 1910-11. What he did not want to see, any more than he wanted to compromise with Asquith, was a resurrection of the cry 'No Parley, No Negotiation, Fight to the Death'. This

attitude might, at first sight, appear contradictory, and Long might be expected to have supported the 'diehard' campaign as its aspirations matched his own almost exactly. On the contrary, he believed that the party could win a general election on the home rule issue - provided that Asquith was not given the chance of fighting on the old slogan of 'Peers versus People'.

To permit 'diehard' intransigence over Ireland to become a major issue was to invite Asquith to use the same tactics as he had used over the budget of 1909 and its corollary, the Parliament Act. Although Long was naturally sympathetic towards the principles behind 'diehard' resistance in the Lords, he would have nothing to do with the movement. He believed that Willoughby de Broke and his fellow rebels would in the long run do both the party and the Union more harm than good. Asquith must be given no opportunity to damage the Conservative vote in a forthcoming general election.[1] As Long insisted to Bonar Law in June: 'The House of Lords must not fall into the trap and enable Coalition [i.e. Liberals and Irish Nationalists] to say they have killed conciliation - an absurd but dangerous cry.'[2]

On 23 June the government made good its offer by introducing an Amending Bill in the Lords to allow Ulster to opt out for six years after a county referendum. The 'diehards' interpreted it as a sign that Asquith

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[1] See Long to Bonar Law, 28 May 1914, B.L.P., 32/3/36.

[2] Long to Bonar Law, 29 June 1914, ibid., 32/4/31.

lacked the will to impose home rule in the face of determined Unionist opposition. Some, like the Earl of Arran, wanted to throw the Bill out and so avoid having to 'acknowledge the principle of Home Rule and split the Unionist party in the country.... In dealing with rascals, the plain straightforward course is the best tactics.'[1] Most could see only that to acquiesce meant to connive at home rule for the rest of Ireland and to give the government a settlement which it could not otherwise force through.[2]

It has been seen that Long consistently placed his hopes in forcing a general election. The same hopes determined his attitude to the Amending Bill. He was opposed to the Lords taking a stand and regarded 'diehard' threats as unrealistic nonsense. His strategy was based on the precedent set in 1846 by the repeal of the Corn Laws. Peel had carried free trade with the aid of Whig votes at a moment when the Tory Protectionists were powerless to resist, yet they turned him out of office a week later. Long hoped for a repeat performance: the Lords should accept the Amending Bill, insisting on the exclusion of Ulster with no time limit. If Asquith

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[1]Arran to Willoughby de Broke, 22 May 1914, W.B.P., WB/10/10.

[2]Lord Raglan expressed the view of many 'diehards' when he commented that the 'govt. who cant get Home Rule through are manoeuvring us into this position of ourselves giving Home Rule which they are unable to do. We the Unionist party will do this thing thereby giving them another lease of life ...' (sic) Raglan to Willoughby de Broke, 5 July 1914, ibid., WB/10/14.

accepted such a Bill, Redmond would be guaranteed to vote against it, so that the Liberals would depend on Conservative votes. And once Asquith had accepted the Amending Bill, Redmond and the Conservatives would unite on some minor question to turn him out and force an election.[1]

Such hopes, however, depended upon the erroneous assumption that Redmond would be foolish enough to turn the Liberals out. In the end, the Tory peers amended the Bill so that exclusion might be permanent and in this form the Bill passed its third reading on 14 July and was sent down to the Commons; but it did not force Asquith to a general election. Already the fight was lost, for the Home Rule Bill had passed the Commons on 25 May by 351 votes to 274.[2] All that remained to be seen was whether or no the threat of civil war in Ulster was real. Was Carson bluffing and would the Conseravtive party play the 'orange card' now that its hand had been called?

With the seemingly ineluctable approach of home rule entering its final stages, Long began to reassess the position. Always a pragmatist, he reluctantly conceded that the Union could not be saved, that some form of home

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[1]Memorandum by Long, 26 June 1914, L.P., Add. MS. 62417.

[2]The Home Rule Bill passed under the provisions of the Parliament Act (see 63 H.C. Deb. ser.5 cols. 88-93). It awaited only the royal assent to become law. Henceforth, the Conservative party was fighting either about the terms of an Amending Bill, which carried the implicit acceptance of a compromise solution, or for a general election. Short of repeal, defeat of home rule in its entirety was no longer possible.

rule had now become inevitable. Historians, knowing that Long did not begin publicly to espouse a federal solution until 1918, have assumed that he was opposed to the idea until well into the war. Indeed, Long has been described as 'an inveterate foe of the federal scheme before the war.'[1] This is not correct. It is true that Long had no natural sympathy for the federal option. His priority was always to defeat home rule, but once he realised that this might not be possible he grasped at federalism as the next best thing. As early as 29 December 1913, for example, he had told Bonar Law:

> Every day brings me fresh and reliable evidence of the fact that our Party are getting increasingly anxious. They believe, and I agree with them, that no possible compromise, save perhaps real Federalism, will endure ...[2]

In the early days of the struggle, when he hoped to defeat home rule outright, Long was extremely hostile to federalism - in 1910 he had greeted the breakup of the constitutional conference with a manifesto, issued under the guidance of Carson, deprecating federal home rule and reaffirming the conviction that Britain 'must remain a Union governed by one Parliament.'[3] But from the moment that Long realised, late in 1913, that it might not be possible to preserve the Union, he regarded

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[1]John Kendle, 'Federalism and the Irish Problem in 1918', History 56 (1971), p. 212.

[2]Long to Bonar Law, 29 Dec. 1913, B.L.P., 31/1/62.

[3]Colvin, Life of Carson, 2, 49; Hyde, Carson, p. 281.

federalism as a second-line defence. His views changed as the political situation changed.[1]

A memorandum written for Lord Lansdowne on 27 June 1914 displays Long as coming boldly to terms with the new situation created by the passing of the Home Rule Bill. This memorandum looks forward to the Irish policy which Long was to advocate during and after the war. Anticipating the developments of later years, he called for the appointment of a convention to find a solution:

> First the appointment of a strong Convention ... is essential to deal satisfactorily with the ... Government of Ireland.... the Irish question must be settled, ... some form of devolution is necessary, and ... there must be an alternative to the Irish policy of the Government - in other words we cannot continue uninterruptedly on the old lines. Only quite lately I have believed we could resume the Government of Ireland without much difficulty, but the time has, I think, gone. The Government, by their folly, have rendered it impossible, and some change is, in my opinion, necessary.[2]

The importance of this memorandum, as a statement of Long's views on the maintenance of the Union, cannot be over-emphasised. It evidences Long advocating an Irish convention and accepting some form of home rule as early as the summer of 1914 and thus represents a major change

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[1]For a discussion of the federalist movement and Ireland before 1914 see John Kendle, 'The Round Table Movement and "Home Rule All Round"', Historical Journal 11 (1968). The Liberal advocates of 'Home Rule All Round' have been considered in Patricia Jalland,'United Kingdom devolution, 1910-14: political panacea or tactical diversion?', English Historical Review 94 (1979).

[2]Memorandum by Long, 27 June 1914, L.P., Add. MS. 62403.

of attitude on the Irish question.

A few days later, on 2 July, Bonar Law and Carson told Lord Murray that if the government agreed to permanent exclusion of four complete Ulster counties and parts of Fermanagh and Tyrone, the Conservative party would accept home rule for the remainder of Ireland. Lord Murray interpreted this as meaning that Bonar Law was ready to force a settlement on his party. More probably, Bonar Law made the offer in an effort to appear reasonable, knowing full well that Redmond would never agree. Despite his memorandum of 27 June, Long was still intent on forcing a general election and putting a Conservative government into office. The Conservatives might then call an Irish convention to draw up a satisfactory solution, rather than just restoring the Union and appointing a strong Chief Secretary, as Long had originally planned. His reluctant acceptance of home rule did not mean that he now wanted to come to some arrangement with the Liberals. It meant simply that he now recognised that the Conservatives would have to sponsor some scheme of home rule after winning an election.

Long was very worried when he learnt that Bonar Law had agreed to an inter-party conference on the Home Rule Bill. He was not consulted in advance and he was not invited to attend. As the advocate of 'no compromise' for so many years and as the one Unionist leader conspicuous for his dislike of any settlement with the government, it was

hardly surprising that he was not invited. Lord Crawford has left an account of the hostile reception afforded by the party to Bonar Law's decision. Bonar Law, Crawford confided to his diary on 17 July,

> ... seems to assume that the position of Tyrone is the only outstanding problem. And moreover it would appear that Carson takes the same view. Is this conceivable? What about our Unionists in Fermanagh, and the Covenanters in Donegal and Cavan? What becomes of Carson's bellicose speeches a week old, and of the strong attitude taken up by the whole party and the press in support of the Lords' decision to exclude the whole of Ulster? I can already hear the cry of those who say they are betrayed, who will break out into violent invective against Carson, against England, and perhaps against the King too.... I cannot guess, I am at a loss to account for this decision to enter a conference having decided in advance to vote against the conviction of the whole party.
>
> ... I fear the worst: another terrible split, a fresh change of leaders, a dissolution while we are in the throes of internal dispute, another long period under the harrow. The outlook is hateful.[1]

Even after Bonar Law had agreed to participate, Long tried to change the decision. Writing to Lansdowne on 19 July, he argued that the

> ... Conference will be very unpopular with all our friends.... Is it too late for you to ask for an audience with H.M.? Our men do not believe in the reality of any arrangement save the Clean Cut. They

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[1] Crawford's diary, 17 July 1914, The Crawford Papers, pp. 339-40.

say "The Party has supported Ulster with votes, speeches and money and should not now at the last moment be sacrificed. The Government are in a hole, must face Civil War or an Election, therefore will choose the latter unless we give in. If we stand firm there can be no settlement. Conference cannot last more than one day." Do let me implore you to save the party from disruption.[1]

Long was fully alive to the imminence of civil war and as anxious as any man to avoid it, but he still believed that Asquith would back down and that no solution could come from talks with the government. His priority was still to force a general election at all costs, for he believed that only with a Conservative government in power could the settlement of Ireland be reconciled with the dictates of party. Nor did he trust Bonar Law to stand up to the combined cajolery of Asquith, Carson and Redmond. For Long, Asquith must be turned out and then the Irish problem dealt with, not the other way round.

In the event, the Buckingham Palace Conference lasted not for one day, as Long had predicted, but for three, between 21 and 24 July. Bonar Law knew that he faced a revolt in his own party if he settled for anything less than the 'clean cut'. Asquith described the proceedings as 'amicable in tone' but 'desperately fruitless in result' and confessed that he had 'rarely felt more hopeless in any practical affair: an impasse, with

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[1]Long to Lansdowne, copy, 19 July 1914, L.P., Add. MS. 62418.

unspeakable consequences, upon a matter which to English eyes seems inconceivably small, and to Irish eyes immeasurably big.'[1] The problem of defining the area to be excluded proved intractable and the conference broke up without even discussing the time limit. Once again, Bonar Law had merely been going through the motions of negotiation. As Leo Amery recorded on 25 July:

> I have never seen a scene of such anger in our Lobby as there was when the Conference was first announced, and it was only when assurances spread round that there was no likelihood of anything coming of it that feeling was in the least mollified.
>
> As it is we are now in a splendid position to say that for the sake of peace we have explored a certain path to the utmost and found it led nowhere...[2]

At the same time as the party leaders were trying to hammer out a solution at Buckingham Palace, Long was busy planning the launch of an Ulster currency in the event of a provisional government being set up. The evidence is very sketchy, but there can be no doubt that Long was involved in a conspiracy to provide financial backing for a provincial government. He regarded this action as fully justified by the Liberals' refusal to submit home rule to an election. In July Long and Milner consulted Moreton Frewen, a journalist, economist and

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[1] Asquith, Letters to Venetia Stanley, p. 109.

[2] Amery to Neville Chamberlain, 25 July 1914, Amery Diaries: Volume One, p. 101.

failed businessman who was a personal friend of Long's and had special knowledge of currency problems.[1] Plans were laid to issue certificates for five, ten and twenty shilling notes to act as an Ulster currency.[2] Moreton Frewen managed to get hold of a 'Clearing House Certificate', which had been used in place of normal currency in the United States in 1907 during the New York bank crisis, as an example to be copied in Ulster. Long's role would be to provide a gold reserve of £100,000 to secure conversion. It was planned that he would do this either by subscription or, more simply, by exchanging the 'certificates' in friendly quarters for gold or other legal tenders. This was the closest that Long came to breaking the law. As

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[1]Moreton Frewen is perhaps best described as an Anglo-American gentleman adventurer. A somewhat absurd figure, he had numerous business interests in the United States and was well connected socially in British governing circles. He was an uncle of Winston Churchill and his niece married Sir Edward Carson. On the Irish question, he was a strong advocate of federalism. See Alan J. Ward, 'Frewen's Anglo-American Campaign for Federalism, 1910-1921', Irish Historical Studies 15 (1967). A biographical study conveys a vivid picture of this colourful character: see Allen Andrews, The Splendid Pauper (London, 1968). Long had also been involved in March 1912 in helping Frewen to raise funds for a federal campaign in support of William O'Brien in Ireland. He acted as an intermediary for an anonymous 'American friend' who donated £500 towards saving O'Brien's paper, the Cork Free Press. Most probably, Long was prepared to help O'Brien only in the hope of splitting the Irish party, or at least weakening Redmond's position. Nonetheless, it is perhaps significant that Long was prepared to involve himself, as early as 1912, in secret negotiations to raise money to be used to push for a federal solution in Ireland. It is also interesting to note that when Frewen sought to circulate his federal ideas amongst leading Unionists in August 1911 he chose to do so through Long.

[2]See also Gollin, "Observer" and Garvin, p. 421, and idem, Proconsul in Politics, pp. 218-9.

the provisional government never came into existence, the scheme was never tested.[1]

The tension was increased with the nationalist gun-running at Howth, near Dublin, on Sunday 26 July, when the Army opened fire in Bachelor's Walk, killing three people. On the following Thursday, 30 July 1914, Asquith intended to proceed with the Amending Bill in the Commons, but the lights were already going out all over Europe and a much bigger crisis led to the Bill's timely abandonment.[2] The Irish question was again put into cold storage, although not without further party controversy.[3] The truth of Lord

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[1]See Frewen to Long, 16 July; Frewen to Milner, 19 July; Frewen to Long, 22 July and 25 July 1914, M.P., MS. Milner dep. 349, fos. 187-91.

[2]After the Home Rule Bill passed on 26 May there was a parliamentary lull, pending the introduction of the promised Amending Bill. This provided only for four county exclusion, an offer already dismissed by Bonar Law earlier in the year. It received a first reading on 23 June and a second reading during the first week of July. It was then, predictably, mutilated by the Lords on 8 July: the opposition amendments gave permanent exclusion to nine counties - the 'clean cut'. When the Buckingham Palace Conference failed on 24 July Asquith announced that the Commons would proceed with the Amending Bill on the 28th. This was postponed and then prevented by the European crisis.

[3]Despite the exigencies of war and the contentiousness of the Irish issue, the government proceeded with home rule, which was placed on the statute book later in the year amidst further scenes of parliamentary uproar, so emphasising the Liberals' embittered relations with the Unionist party. The idea that the home rule controversy was quietly abandoned in August 1914 in 'the national interest' has recently been challenged by Patricia Jalland and John Stubbs in 'The Irish Question after the outbreak of war in 1914: some unfinished party business', English Historical Review 96 (1981). The Conservative leaders seriously considered making a last-ditch stand against the bill by using the powers of the Lords as a constitutional obstruction. A parliamentary filibuster was also considered. As on so many occasions, the party leaders were divided: Long, Chamberlain, Carson, Selborne and Lord

Randolph Churchill's famous quip - 'Ulster will fight and Ulster will be right' - remained to be demonstrated. Five days later, Britain was at war.

It has long been recognised that the outbreak of European war in August 1914 averted a possible civil war in Ulster and saved Britain's last Liberal government from a political disaster over home rule. What has received less attention is the fact that the war saved Bonar Law from his own supporters. Ever since Lord Salisbury had handed over the mantle of leadership to his erudite nephew, Arthur Balfour, the Conservative party had been at odds with itself on almost every major issue. It had been divided over tariff reform, Irish policy, reform of the House of Lords, acceptance of the

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Robert Cecil were for obsruction; Bonar Law, Lansdowne, Balfour and Curzon advised acceptance. In the end, Bonar Law's view prevailed, and the party contented itself with a mass withdrawal from the Commons on 15 September. Asquith described this ostentatious but futile gesture of protest as 'a lot of prosaic and for the most part middle-aged gentlemen trying to look like early French revolutionists ...' (The Earl of Oxford and Asquith, Memories and Reflections, 2 Vols. (London, 1928), 2, 33. Asquith misdated the episode as 14 Sept. 1914). See also John Stubbs, 'The Impact of the Great War on the Conservative party', in Gillian Peele and Chris Cook, eds., The Politics of Reappraisal, 1918-1939 (London and Basingstoke, 1975), pp. 17-19. The Home Rule Bill received the royal assent on 18 September (66 H.C. Deb. ser.5 col. 1017), Asquith having announced that its operation would be suspended for the duration. Lord Crawford summed up the feelings of many Unionists when he recorded in his diary that 'Asquith has behaved like a cardsharper and should never be received into a gentleman's house again.' Crawford's diary, 16 Sept. 1914, The Crawford Papers, p. 343.

Parliament Bill, the selection of a new leader in 1911, and it was equally divided in its attitude to the Home Rule Bill.

Bonar Law was the victim of his own lack of authority and personal following. Law's biographer has pointed out that the negotiations into which he entered with Asquith show that he was at least prepared to consider a compromise solution and that by comparison Long was an intransigent extremist.[1] But Bonar Law entered into the negotiations knowing that he could not possibly allow them to succeed: he had to give the appearance of seeking a compromise, but in order to stave off the attacks of the 'no compromise' faction he had also to eschew compromise. He walked a tightrope between civil war on the one hand and a party split on the other. Given the opportunity, Bonar Law would have accepted Ulster exclusion. His own followers helped to ensure that he was not given the opportunity.

For Long, there could be no compromise: the Union must be defended until its defence was no longer practicable. Everything which he did and said during the home rule crisis indicates that special treatment for Ulster would not have satisfied him, and he clearly resented the way in which Carson gradually usurped his role as the party's leading spokesman on Irish affairs and in so doing emphasised Ulster Unionism at the expense of Irish Unionism. The Union was a sacred political

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[1] Blake, Unknown Prime Minister, pp. 166-71.

principle to Long; he abandoned it only when home rule became an ineluctable fact.

It has been observed that Long was 'as ardent as Lord Milner' in this period in his advocacy of an uncompromising and violent opposition to home rule.[1] Only half of this statement is correct: Long was the advocate of an uncompromising, but not of a violent, opposition to home rule. He never accepted the use of force with the same readiness as Milner, and in his speeches he took care to distance himself from any explicit threats of violence. His speech on the first reading of the Government of Ireland Bill on 16 April 1912 contained no threats, though he concluded with a pledge to Irish Unionists to stand firm;[2] his speech on the Bill's second reading, on 30 April 1912, raised the spectre of conflict in Ulster, but promised only that the Conservative party would give unfailing support to Ulster's cause.[3] Long always picked his words carefully: 'I am not saying whether the Ulstermen are right or wrong; if I were an Ulsterman, and believed as the Ulstermen do believe ... I should resist Home Rule by every means in my power.'[4] These are the carefully phrased and qualified remarks of the politician, not the words of the impetuous advocate of violence. Long differed from Bonar Law and

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[1] Gollin, Proconsul in Politics, p. 194, n. 1.
[2] 37 H.C. Deb. ser.5 cols. 194-211.
[3] Ibid., cols. 1722-43.
[4] 39 H.C. Deb. ser.5 col. 790.

other Unionist leaders only in his assessment of parliamentary tactics. Unlike Milner, Long believed throughout that home rule could and would be defeated at the polls. The agitation in Ulster he regarded as lending assistance to that goal, not as something valuable in itself or likely to lead to any sort of settlement. To turn the Liberals out of office by the ordinary means of a general election was, Long believed, the only sure way to defeat home rule. Hence the propaganda campaign of the U.D.L. was designed to put the English electorate on the side of the Unionists. In the end the British electorate would save the Union. Meanwhile, the Conservative party had to push Asquith to the very edge of the political precipice.

It must be said, however, that Long had very little hard evidence on which to base his contention that a general election would return the Conservatives to office. By the end of May 1914 the Asquith government, elected in December 1910, had lost sixteen seats at by-elections, all of them to candidates calling themselves either Conservative or Unionist. The government losses occurred with a remarkable evenness and regularity- the Liberals lost four seats in 1911, five in 1912, three in 1913, and four in 1914 - which does not suggest that the growing intensity of the home rule crisis was much of a factor in domestic elections. It was always Long's mistake to believe that the British electorate could be swayed in its

voting intentions by the imminence of home rule. The Conservative party had lost only one seat to the government[1] but holding on to their existing seats was hardly an indication of forthcoming triumph. If anything, the Conservative results in 1914 were less promising than those of the previous year.[2] If the by-elections of 1913-14 indicated anything for the Conservative party it was that the Unionist vote was holding steady at about

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[1]The succession of the Marquess of Hamilton as the 3rd Duke of Abercorn necessitated a contest for Londonderry City. The by-election, held on 30 Jan. 1913, resulted in a Liberal victory by 2,699 votes to 2,642. This defeat, albeit by the narrowest of margins, was a serious blow to the Conservative party, for it seriously damaged the argument that Ulster contained a clear Unionist majority: Ulster Unionist MPs were now outnumbered by seventeen to sixteen. For the Liberals to win a by-election in the very heart of Ulster was naturally a tremendous fillip to their home rule campaign.

[2]In 1913 there were twenty-three by-elections, beginning with Flint District on 21 January and ending with Lanarkshire South on 12 December. The Conservatives took three seats, but, as already mentioned, lost Londonderry City. At Cambridgeshire East they won a convincing majority on 16 May; at Reading on 8 November they followed this with another convincing victory; whilst at Lanarkshire South on 12 December they managed to take the seat by just 251 votes. In 1914 there were twenty-four by-elections, seventeen of which were held before the outbreak of war. The pattern was again similar. The Conservatives took four seats from the government and lost none, but their majorities were on two occasions very slender. At Bethnal Green S.W. on 19 February Charles Masterman, the new Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, was defeated by a mere twenty votes; at Leith District, exactly a week later, the Conservatives again scraped home, this time by only sixteen votes; at Derbyshire County N.E. on 20 May the Conservatives won by a rather more respectable 314 votes; and three days later at Ipswich the displaced Charles Masterman was again defeated, on this occasion by well over 500 votes. The above figures are taken from J. Vincent and M. Stenton, McCalmont's Parliamentary Poll Book, British Election Results, 1832-1918 (Brighton, 1971).

its 1910 level, with perhaps small gains being made here and there. As for the prospects for victory at an early general election, these were less certain, a view which Bonar Law conceded privately to Lansdowne when he remarked in September 1913 that even if the party succeeded in forcing Asquith to a dissolution 'we are not certain of winning, and even if we do win, there will be I think the certainty of lawlessness in Ireland on the other side ...'[1].

The conviction of many leading Conservatives that they would gain an outright majority was merely a reflection of the frustration which they felt at their own inabilty to defeat home rule within the framework of the existing House of Commons. Tne most intractable electoral problem for the Conservatives stemmed from the fact that Ireland was so grossly over-represented. Asquith had lost his overall majority in 1910, and government by-election losses had further emphasised his dependence on an Irish party which held the balance of power only because the thorny problem of redistribution had been allowed to drift. By August 1914 there were only 260 Liberals in the House of Commons, whereas the Conservatives numbered 288, a remarkable recovery from the 'débâcle' of January 1906. The Liberal government held office only because it had the dubious backing of eighty-four Irish Nationalists, topped up on occasion by the additional votes of the

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[1]Bonar Law to Lansdowne, 24 Sept. 1913, B.L.P., 33/5/59.

thirty-eight Labour members. It was bitterness and irritation at this parliamentary alignment which led Conservative politicians to issue such strident condemnation of the 'corrupt bargain' which the Liberals had struck, to flirt with extra-parliamentary activity, and yet somehow to believe that an election fought with the anomaly of Irish over-representation could be expected to produce an overall Unionist majority. There had certainly been a marked revival in Tory fortunes - and this during a period which has often been labelled 'the crisis of Conservatism' - but electoral triumph was by no means assured.

Another, and no less important, factor influencing many leading Conservatives in favour of a general election in the summer of 1914 was the belief that it was better to fight on home rule than on tariff reform. With home rule there was a chance of victory, with tariff reform there was none. The Unionists' humiliation in January 1906 had been largely the result of a widespread rejection of 'stomach taxes', a popular conviction that to return Balfour to office meant to endure the 'small loaf' of tariff reform. Conservatives like Long therefore manoeuvred in 1914 for the opportunity of fighting a general election on their own terms. Tariff reform had, for the moment at least, been eclipsed by the Irish question, and the Conservative party was now committed in principle to a second electoral victory before

introducing 'food taxes'. The sustained anti-home rule rhetoric of the Unionist leaders had created at least an impression of party unity. Better, then, to fight a general election on the single issue of home rule with a united party than to wait until tariff reform again made a divisive and debilitating impact on the Unionists' ability to appeal to an electorate more worried over the price of its food than concerned at the fate of Irish Unionists.

It is, of course, true that Long sanctioned and encouraged the use of extra-parliamentary action, but such action was intended only as a supplement to the fight at Westminster, a means to put pressure on the government and to force an appeal to the country. Long was no more an advocate of violence in Ulster than Bonar Law or Lansdowne or any other leading Conservative figure. He merely made the noises which leading Conservatives were expected to make.

On the other hand, it is highly unlikely that if a provisional government had ever come into existence in Ulster Long would have dissociated himself from it or castigated the men of action who had brought it about. He was too closely involved for that. Never a serious advocate of armed resistance by the Ulstermen, Long nonetheless sailed very close to the wind, associating both publicly and privately with men like Carson, Craig and Milner, men who were in all probability prepared to

carry out their threats if put to the test. The truth of the matter was, the Conservative party could not afford to distance itself from men like Carson, Craig, Milner and Professor Dicey: its parliamentary opposition to home rule and its determination to uphold the Union depended for their credibility and impact on the threats of violence and disorder manifested outside parliament.

Walter Long was an advocate of violence and 'no compromise' only in the sense that he believed such advocacy would oust the Liberals from power and bring about a Unionist government well before home rule reached the statute book and made the actual use of violence a real contingency. Home rule would succumb only to resolute political pressure, to 'unceasing, steadfast and carefully arranged opposition - not "rows" but real opposition thought out and organised and never to be remitted for an hour.'[1] The threat of violence was part of a wider political strategy. The substance of violence was never a serious option.

It has often been asserted that the struggle over home rule in 1912-14 evidenced a general lowering of the tone of British political behaviour, a depreciation for which the Unionists were chiefly responsible. It is also generally accepted that the Conservative party flouted the constitution, toyed with treason and led the country to the brink of civil war in its efforts to defeat home rule. In fact, the Ulster Volunteers needed no encouragement

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[1]Long to Bonar Law, copy, 28 May 1914, L.P., Add. MS. 62404.

from the Conservative party, and the events of spring 1914, including the British Covenant, were no more than an histrionic accompaniment to the politics of compromise. None of the Conservative leaders seriously entertained the idea of civil war. Bonar Law accepted home rule in return for Ulster exclusion, his only difficulty being to foist this unpopular solution on his party. Of the other Unionist leaders, Long was the most sedulously intransigent on the surface, but even he reluctantly conceded after May 1914 that home rule would have to be granted.

At the outbreak of war the Home Rule Bill had been passed, its implementation delayed only by the formality of the royal assent and Asquith's commitment to an Amending Bill. The Ulster leaders had made it clear that six counties which guaranteed Protestant hegemony were to be preferred to the historic nine county province, so that the lines of partition were already drawn up. Home rule for the south was a 'fait accompli'. All that remained to be decided was not if, but when it should come into effect.

CHAPTER FOUR

OPPOSITION AND THE ASQUITH COALITION, AUGUST 1914 - DECEMBER 1916

When war broke out in August 1914 Long, like many other leading figures of the time, was somewhat surprised by the speed with which the international stormcloud had broken. He was not a well-travelled man - later in life he regretted that he had not travelled more widely[1] - and, apart from France and Switzerland, which he visited regularly, he had little first-hand knowledge of Europe. He professed a passionate commitment to the idea of Empire, but as to the intricacies of Austro-Serbian relations he readily deferred to the much greater knowledge of Balfour and Lord Lansdowne. Anxious to abandon the political squabbles and tension of past months, Long was genuinely prepared to back the government in a patriotic struggle against the Central Powers. He began the war a firm adherent of the party truce. To Winston Churchill, of all Liberal ministers the most detested by many Conservatives since his apostasy of 1904, Long wrote on 4 August:

> Let me say that I feel you have placed us all under a debt which we cannot easily repay. This is no time for sentiment but it is right you should know that we realise and appreciate the work you have done in this

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[1] Memories, p. 329.

supreme crisis.[1]

Long's first opportunity to assist the war effort came with the government's invitation to serve on the Committee on the Prevention and Relief of Distress, an offer which he gratefully accepted. By the end of September, however, after some seven weeks of tedious work, he was beginning to have doubts about the government's ability to prosecute the war vigorously, and he was looking for an opportunity to resign in the belief that he was being made a fool of by a cabinet which sought to silence potential opposition by encouraging participation without power.[2] Nonetheless, Long persevered with this social work and was an active member of the Committee's successor, the National Relief Fund.

The sudden enlistment of thousands of men revealed that a very large number had been living with women to whom

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[1]Long to Churchill, 4 Aug. 1914, quoted in Martin Gilbert, Winston S. Churchill, Volume Three, 1914-1916 (London, 1971), p. 32. This spirit of magnanimity did not prevent Long from playing a behind-the-scenes role in initiating a movement, ultimately successful, to have Arthur Lee, the Conservative MP for Hampshire (Fareham), expelled from the Carlton Club over an indiscretion which indirectly involved Churchill. Lee had overheard Lord Charles Beresford make some pejorative remark referring to the 'scandal' of retaining Prince Louis of Battenburg as First Sea Lord. Caring little for the rules of club confidentiality, Lee had reported the incident to Churchill, whereupon Beresford had been threatened with disciplinary action. The rules of club etiquette were invoked: Lee was invited to apologise. He stubbornly refused and was forced to offer his resignation, which was promptly accepted. See Private Papers of Lee of Fareham, pp. 134-6. Churchill had good reason to take issue with Beresford's indiscretions. Earlier in the year Beresford had described the First Lord of the Admiralty to a mass audience in Hyde Park as 'a Lilliput Napoleon, a man with an unbalanced mind, an egomaniac.' Quoted in A.P. Ryan, Mutiny at the Curragh (London, 1956), p. 164.

[2]Cameron Hazlehurst, Politicians at War (London, 1971), p. 156.

they were not married, and in many cases unmarried women with dependent children were left with no income as a result of a man volunteering for active service. The numbers involved came as a surprise to the authorities, and many politicians expressed the opinion that to pay state benefits to such women was somehow to condone their 'immorality'. With the help of a rather diverse team comprising Lord Riddell of the News of the World, Mary McArthur of the Women's Trade Union League and William Wedgwood Benn, Liberal MP for Tower Hamlets (St. George's), Long persuaded the National Relief Fund to alter its regulations and so make a weekly grant to these women,[1] now classified as 'unmarried wives'. The decision naturally provoked a good deal of moral outrage and it fell to Long to interview the protesters. His attitude was later described by one of his colleagues:

> Since any soldier and every soldier was dear to his heart, naturally he warmly approved the decision about the unmarried wife. He thought it monstrous that it should be challenged by any narrow-minded person, and his anger became more vocal as the controversy developed. He presided over the sub-committee appointed to interview the malcontents, and for high comedy nothing in my experience beats some of the interviews with worthy ladies who arrived with strings of complaints and moral precepts. They were horrified at their reception ...[2]

Long was the only leading Unionist politician to take an

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[1] Lord Riddell, War Diary (London, 1933), pp. 12-13.

[2] Violet Markham, Return Passage: The Autobiography of Violet Markham (London, 1953), p. 148.

interest in this question.

He began to chafe at the bridle of restriction imposed by the party truce within a matter of weeks of the British declaration of war. As a man who had for so many years revelled in the cut and thrust of parliamentary politics Long found the burden of forced silence intolerable, and from September onwards he swiftly emerged as a focus of opposition both to the continuation of the Liberal government and to Bonar Law's tenuous grip on the loyalty of the Conservative backbenches. It was Churchill's personal intervention at Antwerp, intended to prevent Belgian withdrawal, which provided Long with his first target of attack. On 13 October a leader in the Morning Post, under the title 'The Antwerp Blunder', called on the cabinet 'to keep a tight hand on their impulsive colleague'. On the following day, and under the same heading, the Morning Post published a letter from Long in which it was asserted that the government's policy had created 'a general and profound feeling of consternation.' Thus, it was Long who was responsible, in the words of Margot Asquith, for 'the first departure from the party truce'.[1] And a week later Long hinted at further trouble to come when he told Sir Edward Carson that he did not 'feel satisfied that we can sit silent when manifest and easily remedied blunders are being committed.... We are

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[1]Margot Asquith's diary, 30 Nov. 1914, quoted in Gilbert, Churchill, Volume Three, p. 180. See also ibid. pp. 125-9; Hazlehurst, Politicians at War, p. 192; and John O. Stubbs, 'The Conservative Party and the Politics of War, 1914-1916', Oxford, D.Phil., 1973, pp. 102-3.

now silent.... I, for one, am not prepared to sit down and see our men sacrificed when things could easily be put right ...'[1] But there was little he could do, save try to stir Bonar Law to take a firmer line. On 25 November Long wrote to his leader:

> The procrastination of the Government is disatrous, and personally I regret ... that A.J.B.'s patriotism and devotion to duty have compelled him to join in their counsels, because in this as in evrything else their craven spirit will lead them to make free use of his name.... I wish you would see your way to press the Government, as their inaction is ... really very dangerous ...[2]

Finding that his letter brought no response, Long decided to visit the Front and assess the situation for himself. He was quick to appreciate that the fighting would be protracted and bitter; there would be no easy victory before Christmas. On his return in mid-December Long prepared a memorandum for his colleagues, calling for early reinforcements to the Army and containing a graphic description of his impressions.[3] His observations, and his conversations with Sir John French at St. Omer, fuelled Long to press his colleagues more strongly and, in particular, to demand immediate reinforcements of 100,000 men. He implored Bonar Law to put the case resolutely to

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[1]Long to Carson, 21 Oct. 1914, quoted in Colvin, Life of Carson, 3, 39.

[2]Long to Bonar Law, 25 Nov. 1914, B.L.P., 35/3/66.

[3]Memorandum by Long, 16 Dec. 1914, L.P., Add. MS. 62418.

the government,[1] but Bonar Law still hoped to avoid trouble, merely remarking that Long's memorandum was 'interesting' and suggesting that he seek an interview with Kitchener at the War Office.[2] Long dismissed this idea out of hand. Already, he had little faith in Kitchener's ability or competence:

> No use my seeing K., he wd. regard me as 'advocatus diaboli'.... If I have to see anybody it must be Asquith, but I am afraid he is not strong enough.... I don't suggest we should attempt to decide between French and K. ... but Gov. ought to ... support man in command.[3]

Long found Lansdowne and Curzon - Curzon was now acting as the party's leader in the Lords - more accommodating, and two days before Christmas he was able to inform Bonar Law with undisguised pleasure that Curzon would push the question in the Upper House and that Lansdowne 'knows what I am about and approves my action.'[4] Convinced that he had the backing of the party, Long then went on to demand that Bonar Law obtain from Asquith a clear understanding that continued Unionist support for the government could only be given on certain conditions: Asquith must promise to provide the Conservative leaders with accurate and complete information, and he must state

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[1]Long to Bonar Law, 16 Dec. 1914, B.L.P., 35/5/44.
[2]Bonar Law to Long, copy, 17 Dec. 1914, ibid., 37/4/38.
[3]Long to Bonar Law, 18 Dec. 1914, ibid., 35/5/47.
[4]Long to Bonar Law, 23 Dec. 1914, ibid., 35/5/55.

in parliament that the government intended to give unqualified support to the Army in the field.[1] To Curzon Long emphasised that there 'is a good deal more to be said & I think it wd. be well if we could have some talk. The Gov. are a little too high-handed in their methods & there is a limit to our patience, or ought to be!'[2] With both Long in the Commons and Curzon in the Lords dissatisfied, Bonar Law was obliged to respond, especially as Lansdowne confirmed on Boxing Day that 'I do not think Walter will propose anything unreasonable.'[3] It was gradually made clear to the government that Conservative support could neither be taken for granted nor received without concessions in return.

Over the Christmas holiday Long also began to explore ways in which he could assist attacks on the government from outside parliament. On 1 January 1915 he wrote to Colonel Repington, the military correspondent of The Times, suggesting that they form a kind of secret partnership.[4] Repington was only too pleased to co-operate and undertook to provide Long with inside information and military expertise.[5] From the beginning of 1915, therefore, Long had access to military reports and assessments other than those provided through official channels.

Not surprisingly, Long's insistence on challenging the

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[1] Memorandum by Long, 21 Dec. 1914, ibid., 35/5/55.

[2] Long to Curzon, 23 Dec. 1914, C.P., MSS. Eur. F. 112/96. (Long's underlining).

[3] Lansdowne to Bonar Law, 26 Dec. 1914, B.L.P., 35/5/58.

[4] Long to Repington, copy, 1 Jan. 1915, L.P., Add. MS. 62419.

[5] Repington to Long, 2 Jan. 1915, ibid.

government, contrary to Bonar Law's desire for a quiet life, was deeply resented. Bonar Law was forced into the humiliating position of having to assure Long personally that as party leader he was ready to modify his opinions 'in regard to any question ... whenever it is possible.'[1] Such an assurance from Bonar Law was tantamount to an admission that he could not lead the party without Long's support. He even accused Long outright of adopting 'bullying methods', a suggestion which at least elicited a half-hearted apology.[2]

Long's attacks continued throughout January, so much so that Bonar Law became seriously worried at the prospect of an independent revolt against the party truce from the backbenches, a revolt which would, of course, be fanned by Long. On the 27th Long presented his leader with a forthright memorandum demanding that 'our entire absence of responsibility for, or previous knowledge of, the Government's War Policy be emphatically declared.'[3] Curzon, too, was dissatisfied with the opposition's role and supported Long by preparing a brilliantly worded memorandum castigating Kitchener's rule at the War Office.[4]

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[1]Bonar Law to Long, copy, 6 Jan. 1915, B.L.P., 37/5/1.

[2]Long to Bonar Law, 6 Jan. 1915, ibid., 36/1/7.

[3]Memorandum by Long, 27 Jan. 1915, L.P., Add. MS. 62419.

[4]Memorandum by Curzon, n.d., but clearly written in support of Long's memorandum, B.L.P., 36/2/46. 'The Secretary of State for War', Curzon complained, 'reads us exiguous memoranda of platitudes known to everybody, is acclaimed by the Liberal press as having delivered an almost inspired oration and scored off his impertinent antagonists, he interpolates a curt affirmative or negative to the solitary speech to which he deigns to listen, and he then marches out and leaves the rest of the debate to colleagues who either affect to know nothing or screen their silence behind his authority.'

Long averred that 'it should be stated definitely that the Opposition does not desire - and ... is not prepared to assent to - a Coalition Government',[1] and pointed out that by agreeing not to contest by-elections the Conservative party had deprived itself of the most powerful weapon possessed by an opposition to influence political controversy. He felt keenly the lack of real influence he was able to exert over the conduct of the war and concluded that 'all the advantages of the party truce remain with the Government.'[2] Bonar Law declared that there could be no half-way house between the existing policy of very limited criticism without responsibility and full coalition. In Bonar Law's view, Long was trying to have it both ways by demanding more information and more influence, yet shrinking from any suggestion of coalition. With some justification, Law maintained that the criticisms of Long, Curzon and Lansdowne led inexorably to coalition.[3] What Bonar Law could not do, however, was ignore these strictures on the government.

The first tangible outcome of this growing Conservative disaffection was the appointment of the Unionist Business Committee (U.B.C.) under Long's chairmanship, an official opposition group designed to give party malcontents 'some means of influencing the government without breaking the party truce.'[4] Bonar Law very probably chose Long to head

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[1]Memorandum by Long, 27 Jan. 1915, L.P., Add. MS. 62419.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Bonar Law to Curzon, 29 Jan, 1915, C.P., MSS. Eur. F. 112/96.

[4]Ramsden, Age of Balfour and Baldwin, p. 112.

the U.B.C. in order to channel his potentially divisive energies into constructive criticism. There can be no doubt that Long had become a serious nuisance to Bonar Law by January 1915, and whilst he was not the obvious candidate for the chairmanship of a committee whose primary function was to advise on matters of commerce and industry, Law could hardly afford to give the job to somebody else.

The U.B.C. was formed in response to an invitation circulated by Ernest Pollock and Basil Peto, and it held its first meeting on Wednesday 27 January at 4.30 p.m. in the offices of the Irish Unionist Alliance. Meetings were originally scheduled for Thursdays at 5 p.m. in the House of Commons, but this time was later varied considerably to suit members.[1] Early members included a significant number of Long's personal followers, in particular Sir William Bull, who acted as parliamentary secretary to the committee, Sir Harry Samuel and Lord Charles Beresford. It should, however, be noted that leading tariff reformers like Edward Goulding and Professor W.A.S. Hewins, both of whom were prominent in the Chamberlain wing of the party, joined at the committee's inception. The group also included a future prime minister, Stanley Baldwin.[2]

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[1]The minute book, giving details of the U.B.C.'s meetings between 27 Jan. 1915 and 29 Feb. 1916, can be found in the Hewins Papers, Sheffield University Library, Box 26.

[2]The first meeting was attended by the following: Long, Bull, J.G. Butcher, Lord Charles Beresford, Sir Harry Samuel, Major Hamilton, Colonel A.J. Sykes, A.F. Bird, Stanley Baldwin, Evelyn Cecil, Sir Alexander Henderson, Professor Hewins, Ernest Pollock, Basil Peto, J.F. Hope, A. Hamersley,

Over the months the U.B.C. was attended by numerous other backbenchers besides those involved in its formation, and it grew steadily in size and influence until it included most of the Conservative MPs not on active service,[1] though attendance at general meetings never exceeded forty.[2] The committee was not primarily a pressure group through which Long exerted influence on the government and on his own party leaders. Rather, it gathered information and criticised government policy with the full blessing of Bonar Law, and when Long asserted in the Daily Telegraph on 3 February, in an article probably drafted by Sir William Bull, that the committee would feel free to criticise government conduct of the war Bonar Law did not dissent. Certainly, the chairmanship does seem, temporarily at least, to have acted as an anodyne to Long's irritation, and after January 1915 there was a noticeable abatement of the trenchant memoranda by which Long gave expression to his political discontent.[3]

Even so, Long's hostility towards the Liberal cabinet

S. Samuel, Edward Goulding, R.E. Prothero, J.F. Mason, W. MacCaw, Almeric Paget, George Cave, W. Hume-Williams, and A. Shirley Benn. See U.B.C. minute book, Hewins Papers, Box 26. The names of the founding members also appeared in the Morning Post on 3 Feb. 1915. The executive committee comprised Long, Bull, Pollock, Hewins, Cave, Hope, Paget, Peto and Samuel. There were five sub-committees, one each for the study of wartime contraband, aliens, industry, supplies and employment.

[1] W.A.S. Hewins, The Apologia of an Imperialist, 2 Vols. (London, 1929), 2, 11-12.

[2] Stubbs, 'Impact of the Great War on the Conservative Party', pp. 23-4.

[3] Evidence on the activities of the U.B.C. is very sketchy. The best account is Stubbs, 'Conservative Party and the Politic of War', pp. 124-33 and 160-8, to which I am indebted. Dr Stubbs shows that the U.B.C., despite published claims to

continued. He was rather more generous to Kitchener in his autobigraphy, describing him as 'that splendid specimen of the British race', 'the right man in the right place',[1] than in his private correspondence, which expressed clear vexation with the Secretary of State for War. To Lady Londonderry Long wrote on 18 March: 'What an awful list of casualties! It makes one heartsick. I can't imagine why K., himself a soldier, allows so many to die ...'[2] His anxieties were naturally increased by the fact that his two sons, Toby, a career soldier, and Eric, were on active service abroad.

It has been seen that Long was inimical to the idea of a wartime coalition. Yet in May 1915 he agreed to take office as President of the Local Government Board and to sit in a cabinet, in which Liberal ministers still

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the contrary by both Long and Hewins, did not initiate debate on the munitions question. Rather, the U.B.C. took up the munitions issue only in the latter half of March 1915, by which time the question was already one for public debate. Dr Stubbs has concluded that 'the basic reason for the emergence of the Unionist Business Committee was to provide the party leadership with a manageable escape valve for the more energetic and restless backbenchers who chafed under the restraints of what they considered to be a totally unnatural political situation.' Long gave an account of the U.B.C. in Memories, but his autobiography is frequently inaccurate. Sir Charles Petrie simply followed this account in Walter Long and his Times. Hewins published his own version in The Apologia of an Imperialist, Volume 2, and there is some manuscript material amongst his papers. Sir William Bull kept press cuttings and there is some manuscript material amongst the new collection of his papers at Churchill College, Cambridge (See Bu.P., 4/11-14).

[1] Memories, p. 216.

[2] Long to Lady Londonderry, 18 Mar. 1915, L.L.P., D/Lo/C 666(264).

predominated. How did this come about? Fortunately for Bonar Law, Long was confined to bed at Rood Ashton when the political crisis erupted, so that his power to influence events was somewhat diminished.[1] Long's absence no doubt contributed to Bonar Law's readiness to come to an arrangement with Asquith. Law knew that Long was against a coalition and might choose to make trouble; Long gave no comfort and would offer no assurance that he would abide by his leader's decision. On the contrary, he made it plain on 12 May that he would remain outside: 'I only want to say that I hope you won't worry about whom you take with you. I would gladly 'stand down''.[2] In other words, Long tried to impress on Bonar Law that there was not the slightest chance of his joining, hoping that the implicit threat of opposition from the backbenches would deter Bonar Law from running the risk of a party split.

Two days later Law tried to undermine Long's opposition by appealing to his sense of loyalty and promising that any coalition would be 'constituted in such a way that we could feel that we should really be able to exert an effective influence over the conduct of the war.'[3] Long promptly suggested that Bonar Law capitalise on the public clamour for some form of national government to force

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[1]Long was suffering from eczema. He was so ill that he was unable to contemplate travelling to London. 'I am a prisoner in bed', he told Bull, ' clothed in lint and bandages from knee to neck! A most infernal nuisance.' Long to Bull, 10 May 1915, Bu.P., 4/11.

[2]Long to Bonar Law, 12 May 1915, B.L.P., 37/2/19.

[3]Bonar Law to Long, 14 May 1915, L.P., Add. MS. 62404.

Asquith to prosecute the war with greater vigour, for this was all the Tory backbenchers required.[1] Yet Long had already realised that he was powerless to prevent coalition. Writing from Rood Ashton on 19 May, Long now argued that there must be no appearance of haste in doing a deal with Asquith and that 'the allocation of offices is of even more importance than the selection of men.'[2]

By 19 May, then, Long was beginning to accept the idea of a wartime coalition, albeit reluctantly and only because, confined to bed, he was isolated and unable to mount serious opposition. He changed tack gradually, intent on getting the best possible terms for the Conservatives if he could not prevent coalition altogether. He insisted that there should be a fair distribution of cabinet posts and that there was no reason why Bonar Law should extricate the Liberals from a crisis of their own making. He wanted the War Office given to a member of the Commons, describing Kitchener's reign as 'nothing short of a scandal',[3] and he would have liked Asquith replaced as prime minister. For Long, the Liberals were 'unscrupulous' and 'dishonest'. He suggested displacing Kitchener by making him Commander-in-Chief Home Forces and allowing him to retain his seat in cabinet so as to safeguard his public popularity; Long also subscribed to

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[1] Long to Bonar Law, 15 May 1915, B.L.P., 117/1/9.
[2] Long to Bonar Law, 19 May 1915, ibid., 117/1/11.
[3] Ibid.

the almost universal execration amongst Unionists of R.B. Haldane, insisting that there could be no place in the new government for the Lord Chancellor.[1]

Yet Long had still not committed himself unequivocally to coalition, for there was also the question of his own position to be considered. As he pointed out to Bonar Law, the problem was one of finding enough posts to go round: '... you may easily find yourself with more horses than you have vacant stalls.'[2] His offer to stand down contained a clear hint that he might oppose the new ministry, despite protestations of personal loyalty to Bonar Law:

> Believe me I shall be neither hurt nor disappointed. If this new Gov. is not to have a new policy then of what use is it going to be? And to be really useful it must be not too big and thoroughly united. I am not at all sure that I could not be of more service to you out of rather than inside the Gov.[3]

On the following day, 21 May, Long again beseeched his leader to take a tough line in the negotiations with Asquith.[4]

Long's real attitude towards coalition is indicated by two confidential letters which he wrote on Saturday 22 May. To Lady Londonderry he confirmed that 'I don't like Coalition. I don't believe it will work in practice and

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[1] Ibid.
[2] Long to Bonar Law, 20 May 1915, ibid., 117/1/12.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Long to Bonar Law, 21 May 1915, ibid., 117/1/14.

I can't bear the idea of Englishmen sitting in Conference with these double-dyed traitors.'[1] On the same day he despatched a most extraordinary, not to say devious, letter to Asquith in a vain attempt to influence him to stay on as Liberal prime minister. Long asserted mendaciously that the majority of Conservatives were on the whole satisfied with Asquith's record as war leader, desiring only to witness firmer national leadership from the government, particularly over compulsory military service.[2] So desperate was Long to avoid a coalition in which the Unionists would be the weaker partners that he was prepared to make a secret appeal to Asquith, a prime minister for whom he had neither respect nor admiration, to stay on. Just two days earlier Long had promised Bonar Law that he would abide by any decision which his leader might take.[3] He was, nonetheless, prudent enough to pledge himself to Asquith to support the government whatever the outcome of the negotiations,[4] realising that to attack the notion of coalition too forcibly might be to guarantee his own exclusion from the cabinet.

Meanwhile, on that same Saturday, 22 May 1915, Bonar Law met the Liberal leaders to discuss the allocation of posts in the new government. Long's position was naturally a central topic for consideration. Frances Stevenson's

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[1]Long to Lady Londonderry, 22 May 1915, L.L.P., D/Lo/C 666(267).

[2]Long to Asquith, copy, 22 May 1915, L.P., Add. MS. 62404.

[3]Long to Bonar Law, 20 May 1915, B.L.P., 117/1/12.

[4]Long to Asquith, copy, 22 May 1915, loc. cit.

account of the meeting, recorded two days later after a conversation with Lloyd George, reveals the sensitivity with which Bonar Law regarded his own position:

> The question ... came up of Mr. Walter Long. B. Law said there was a very strong feeling in the Tory party that he should become a member of the new Cabinet & that there would be discord if he did not. Where, then, should he go? B. Law said he felt certain he would not accept a minor office.... Mr. Balfour then suggested that ... he (Balfour) would be quite satisfied with a nominal post in the Cabinet - say Lord President of the Council - which would leave the Admiralty free for Mr. A. Chamberlain, & a vacancy for Long. 'Oh no!', said B. Law instantly. 'I could not have that. It would be putting him above me in status, which could not possibly be allowed!'[1]

Even more illuminating is Maurice Bonham-Carter's account:

> B.L. ... was very frank about X [Long], simply regarding him as a necessary evil being likely to cause more difficulties outside than within the Cabinet.... X he says, though useless in Counsel is the most popular man in the Tory party - a position he has gained by persistent cadging and lobbying. B.L. has no illusions about his own position in the party, frankly recognising that he is a compromise.[2]

But what post was Long to be offered? That weekend was the Whitsun holiday weekend and Sir William Bull and his

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[1]Frances Stevenson's diary, 24 May 1915. A.J.P. Taylor, ed., Lloyd George, A Diary by Frances Stevenson (London, 1971), p. 54.

[2]Bonham-Carter to Violet Asquith, n.d. but clearly written soon after the meeting of 22 May 1915, quoted in Violet Bonham-Carter, Winston Churchill As I Knew Him (London, 1965), p. 406.

wife stayed with Long at Rood Ashton. Long had been promised that Lord Edmund Talbot would travel down to keep him informed of developments, but Talbot had not turned up by Friday evening, so Long knew nothing of the discussions arranged for Saturday. Before leaving for Wiltshire Bull had been closely questioned by Bonar Law and Austen Chamberlain as to Long's condition. Failing to perceive the object of these solicitations, Bull remarked that Long was very ill and in great pain and discomfort.[1] Thus, Bonar Law knew that Long would definitely be out of the way over the weekend. On Saturday Bull telephoned Asquith from Rood Ashton, but was unable to get hold of the prime minister. Much to Long's annoyance, that day's newspapers commented that his health was too bad to allow acceptance of anything other than a minor office.

Early on Saturday evening Bull again telephoned London, managing this time to speak to Bonar Law. The negotiations with the Liberals had been concluded and Long's fate decided upon, but Bonar Law would say nothing. Instead, he declared that Talbot would be leaving Paddington for Rood Ashton first thing in the morning.[2] For Long and his guests, Saturday evening was passed in suspense. Talbot had been instructed to try to buy Long off with the Board of Agriculture and to increase the offer to the

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[1]Bull's diary, 26 May 1915 (relating to the events of 21-25 May 1915), Bu.P., 4/11.

[2]Ibid.

Local Government Board only if necessary. Bull's diary relates what happened next:

> I met Edmund Talbot at the Station. All I have to offer him is the Board of Agriculture said he - How do you think he will take it he asked me as we came back in the motor.
>
> I do not think he will look at it:- It was an office he created and occupied 20 years ago:-
>
> Shall you speak to him before lunch - There will be only 10 minutes I said -
>
> Yes said Edmund I had better get it over:-
>
> Long refused Agriculture - but finally accepted the Local Government Board.[1]

Long accepted office against the advice of Bull, who wanted him to stay out and assume the leadership of the opposition in parliament, but, as Bull realised only too well, 'if you appeal to Long's patriotism you can do anything with him.'[2] Money seems also to have been a factor. Lady Doreen's reaction to Talbot's news is revealing: 'If we took Agriculture Walter would be £500 a year to the bad because he would have to give up £2,500 worth of Director's fees.'[3] But Long did not lightly abandon his claims to an important office. As early as

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[1] Ibid. [2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid. Certainly, Long's finances were in a parlous state at this time. A few months earlier he had confided to Bull: 'I am obliged to make heavy reductions, a great part of my income having failed, temporarily only I hope.' See Long to Bull, 22 Feb. 1915, Bu.P., 4/11. Bull believed that the higher salary of the Local Government Board was a factor of considerable importance. See Bull's diary, 'Retrospect for the first half of 1915', Bu.P., 4/11. The Local Government Board carried a salary of £5,000 p.a., whereas the President of the Board of Agriculture received only £2,000 p.a.

17 May Austen Chamberlain had suggested that Long would 'really make an excellent Home Secretary',[1] and on Sunday afternoon Long pressed his claim, writing to Bonar Law that he would feel it 'acutely' if he did not receive a Secretaryship of State, even remarking pointedly that 'we know all about the leadership.'[2] On the following day Long made a direct approach to Asquith with the clear intimation that he would like to be offered the Home Office. He stated plainly that although he would be pleased to join the government at the Local Government Board he felt 'obliged to consider what will be the view of those friends with whom I have worked for many years', especially as 'there is a widespread opinion that somebody else should try their hand' as Home Secretary.[3]

In the event, Sir John Simon went to the Home Office and Long returned to the Local Government Board after an absence of just over ten years. If Long had managed to get the job which he wanted not only would he have been able to exercise considerable control over the war on the home front, but he would have occupied a much more senior post in the coalition than Bonar Law. Long would have been regarded as the foremost Unionist in the government - a very strong position from which to conduct business with the leaders of both parties.

Anxious to keep control of the war in the hands of his

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[1] Chamberlain to Bonar Law, 17 May 1915, B.L.P., 37/2/37.
[2] Long to Bonar Law, 23 May 1915, ibid., 50/3/39.
[3] Long to Asquith, 24 May 1915, A.P., MS. Asquith 16/165-8.

own followers, Asquith refused to give the Home Office to a Unionist, just as he refused to give the Exchequer to a Unionist. Sir John Simon was well known to hold views quite at odds with those of Long. Amongst other things, he was renowned as an opponent of military compulsion, whereas Long was its staunch champion. Simon's appointment was deliberately and delicately balanced against Long's at the Local Government Board, a department whose functions might overlap with the Home Office but which could never play such a decisive part in determining war policy. From Asquith's point of view, Long's appointment was a skilful manoeuvre. Long had held the post before and his experience indicated that he would prove a more than capable wartime administrator. Asquith could not leave Long out altogether, otherwise he ran the risk that parliamentary opposition to the coalition would continue, despite Bonar Law's allegiance. And Long's shaky loyalty to Bonar Law might, at any time prove of value in helping Asquith to keep the Unionist leadership in check. From the prime minister's point of view, then, Long's appointment was a judicious piece of political balancing.[1]

And so, a semblance of political unity was restored. As Long told Sir Edward Carson on 25 May: 'I would support the D——l himself as P.M., with a Cabinet of his pet angels, if they would adopt compulsion all round and prosecute the

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[1]For a discussion of Asquith's 'balancing operation' in May 1915 see Gollin, Proconsul in Politics, pp. 259-66.

war with vigour.'[1] Certainly, Long made no secret of his view that there must be compulsion if the war was to be won.[2] So far, the Tory backbenchers had been kept in the dark. Bonar Law and Lansdowne tried to explain their reasons for supporting a coalition at a party meeting held at the Carlton Club on 26 May.[3] There was by no means unanimous support, with Lords Lovat and Willoughby de Broke openly denouncing the arrangement unless there was a firm guarantee of conscription. But the party was presented with a 'fait accompli'; it had little choice but to acquiesce in a decision which had been taken without either its knowledge or its approval. For once, Bonar Law had outmanoeuvred Long and the serried ranks of Conservative backbenchers, although he had in his turn been outmanoeuvred by the politically more adroit Asquith.

The manner in which the coalition had been brought into being was hardly auspicious. Long was a reluctant convert. He had placed his sense of duty and patriotism above his inclination to secure real power both for himself and for his party. If he had been given a more important office he might perhaps have been prepared to forget past differences As it was, he felt let down by Bonar Law, and it was not

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[1]Long to Carson, 25 May 1915, quoted in Colvin, Life of Carson, 3, 50-1.

[2]Sir Robert Sanders recorded: 'I learnt ... from Edmund [Talbot] that the Unionist leaders went in without any guarantee as to National Service. But Walter Long said quite openly in conversation that of course we must have it; else we might as well try to make peace right away.' Sanders diary, 13 Sept. 1915.

[3]For an official account of the meeting see The Times, 27 May 1915. See also Stubbs, 'Conservative Party and the Politics of War', pp. 201-4.

long before he began to jib at the restraints imposed by his new-found responsibilities. Above all, he was bitter that Bonar Law had failed to assert the right of the Conservatives to a greater share of cabinet offices and greater influence in the day to day running of the war. He continually pressed Bonar Law to insist on being Leader of the House whenever Asquith was absent, instead of meekly accepting that the task would fall automatically to Lloyd George or McKenna. The situation, he maintained, was 'an unsatisfactory one, and we cannot wonder that it makes our friends seriously discontented and alarmed.'[1]

Long's own view of the uneasy relations in the new cabinet is apparent from a letter which he wrote to Lady Londonderry on 29 May: 'The Cabinet went off quite well. No black eyes!... We are all agreed and will pull together whereas they have evidently been at sixes and sevens. None of them seem to know nothing!' (sic)[2] And Walter Runciman gave Charles Hobhouse the following description of the Unionists in cabinet:

> Carson very adroit and resourceful; B.Law ineffective and puny, and openly flouted by Curzon; Lansdowne most useful; Chamberlain insignificant and unsuggestive; Long, very quarrelsome; the P.M. on the defensive, very apprehensive, and at last alive to the consequence of his

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[1]Memorandum by Long, n.d., probably June 1915, W.L.P., WRO 947/496.

[2]Long to Lady Londonderry, 29 May 1915, L.L.P., D/Lo/C 666(268).

slothfulness and timidity.[1]

Long was, however, astute enough to offer repeated declarations of loyalty to Asquith, impressing upon the prime minister that he was 'prepared to support any policy if it is determined and consistent.'[2] Immersed in his work at the Local Government Board and convinced that, for the moment at least, there was no alternative to Asquith, Long served for just over eighteen months under a prime minister whom for years he had done his best to remove from office and in a cabinet which contained several of his most notable political enemies.[3]

Long was from the first doubtful as to the wisdom of the Dardanelles expedition, suspecting that Churchill was the victim of his own temerity. Writing to the prime minister, Long tried to introduce a note of caution: 'I, for one, hold strongly that before we finally decide what is to be the ultimate scope of ... operations we ought to consider the campaigns in Flanders and the Dardanelles together and take careful stock of our resources.'[4] Long's

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[1]Hobhouse's diary, 22 June 1915, in Edward David, ed., Inside Asquith's Cabinet: From the Diaries of Charles Hobhouse (London, 1977), p. 249.

[2]Long to Asquith, copy, 18 July 1915, L.P., Add. MS. 62404.

[3]Particularly unsuited to government in wartime in Long's opininion were McKenna, now Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir John Simon, the new Home Secretary, and Augustine Birrell, who retained the Irish Office. Kitchener's retention of the War Office was a major irritation.

[4]Long to Asquith, copy, 19 June 1915, L.P., Add. MS. 62404.

anxiety was increased by the fact that his younger son, Eric, had been sent to Gallipoli,[1] and when news of the appalling casualty list came in he reacted angrily:

> ... the Dardanelles is awful: now is the time to fix the responsibility, but there is a terrible burden on somebody's shoulders: we ... have only to realise the facts and press on with vigour tempered by discretion.[2]

Always opposed to needless loss of life, Long never believed that the expedition could achieve results which would in any way compensate for the cost in men and money. Nor was he prepared to throw more men away in a futile attempt to retrieve the situation.

By August 1915 he was convinced that withdrawal was the only sensible option. In a memorandum circulated to his colleagues Long argued that

> ... to strengthen our Forces in the Dardanelles and to be able to relieve men worn out by fighting and exhausted by fatigue is, in my opinion, to send men to their death, and I am opposed to anything of the kind. We cannot fight without losing lives, but ... we can ... minimise the risks ...[3]

He did his best to persuade Bonar Law to take a stand in cabinet, telling his leader on 14 October that 'We must get out of Gallipoli. Now is the chance and the moment.'[4]

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[1] See Long to Lady Londonderry, 5 June 1915, L.L.P., D/Lo/C 666(269).

[2] Long to Lady Londonderry, 23 June 1915, ibid., D/Lo/C 666(271).

[3] Memorandum by Long, dated 'August 1915', L.P., Add. MS. 62420.

[4] Long to Bonar Law, 14 Oct. 1915, B.L.P., 117/1/21.

Three days later he promised Sir Edward Carson that 'nothing will induce me to give my sanction to sending more troops to share the fate of these gallant fellows who have been so ruthlessly sacrificed on the Peninsula.'[1] When Bonar Law finally decided to stand out for evacuation Long gave his wholehearted support, though he insisted that resignation would be a useless gesture. In the end, the Gallipoli campaign was abandoned; the last beach at Helles was evacuated on 8 January 1916. Churchill was disgraced, although when he resigned from the government in November 1915 Long wrote magnanimously: 'You have borne much misrepresentation with dignity and self-restraint & I am certain you will maintain this attitude to the end. I wish you the best of luck in your new role whatever it may be.'[2] The episode hardly strengthened Long's loyalty to the coalition.

Indeed, although Long's inclusion in Asquith's cabinet stifled his public opposition he continued to believe that the government's prosecution of the war was feeble. He commented to Carson in August 1915 that 'it cannot be said that the Government have as yet made any supreme effort.... Nobody out of Bedlam would expect us in two months to clear up the mess made in the preceding nine months ...'[3] He persisted in the view that Bonar Law, and not Lloyd George, should be Leader of the House in

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[1]Long to Carson, copy, 17 Oct. 1915, L.P., Add. MS. 62420.

[2]Long to Churchill, 14 Nov. 1915, quoted in Gilbert, Churchill, Volume Three, Companion (part II), p. 1263.

[3]Long to Carson, 7 Aug. 1915, quoted in Colvin, Life of Carson, 3, 70.

the event of Asquith's absence. Recognising that Law would never insist on the job for himself, Long made the request directly to Asquith in September, noting that there was 'strong feeling among the rank and file of our Party that the change ought to be made.'[1]

He soon found not only that the Conservatives lacked power in the coalition but that they often lacked adequate information as well. Interestingly, he strongly disapproved of the government's failure to keep the public properly informed and he deprecated the suppression of The Globe for a fortnight after the paper had, on 6 November, asserted that Kitchener was on the point of resignation over Gallipoli. He could see no justification for curtailing public discussion or for withholding news, even bad news. Secrecy within government was particularly galling. On 19 October he expressed these grievances to Asquith:

> ... I am convinced there is too much ... concealment both within and without the Cabinet and nothing but good can follow if there is greater frankness. Papers are withheld which ought to be circulated. This has certainly been the case at the W.O. in regard to the Dardanelles ... and it frequently happens in Cabinet that reference is made to papers which have never reached many of the Members. The same thing applies in the circulation of information to the House and the Public.[2]

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[1]Long to Asquith, copy, 18 Sept. 1915, W.L.P., WRO 947/498.

[2]Long to Asquith, copy, 19 Oct. 1915, ibid., WRO 947/497.

Just as Long had criticised both Balfour and Bonar Law for weak leadership, so he criticised Asquith for the policy of 'Wait and See'. He was far from reluctant to make his views known, and he bombarded the prime minister with unsolicited advice. His tone could be blunt, his prose mordant. The following, addressed to Maurice Bonham-Carter on 1 November 1915, is typical:

> It may be an impertinence to criticise but I risk it! - I have always thought the Prime Ministers did not command the Cabinets sufficiently.... He is master and the more he orders the better I believe things will go, especially at a time like this.... I believe Parliament and Country want more 'ordering'.[1]

It cannot be said that Long ever gave his full support to Asquith; he was at best an uneasy partner in an uneasy coalition. December found him extremely irritated at the continuation of the Plural Voting Bill, a contentious measure which Long believed shoud be abandoned in the interests of coalition unity. He understood Bonar Law's weak spots, for he frequently pointed out that 'the Party ought to have been consulted before we agreed to join Asquith and not afterwards'[2] - this was a sore point with Long for the rest of his career. Bonar Law was curtly informed that 'more leadership, control, and discipline' were required.[3] Unfair distribution of patronage

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[1]Long to Bonham-Carter, 1 Nov. 1915, A.P., MS Asquith 15/86-8 (Long's underlining).

[2]Memorandum by Long to Bonar Law, 12 Dec. 1915, B.L.P, 52/1/28.

[3]Ibid.

appointments, especially to Irish Unionists, was another frequently voiced complaint, and just before Christmas Long wrote officially to Bonar Law on the subject, formally requesting that his objections be brought to the attention of the prime minister.[1] Apart from the major issue of confusion and muddle in the running of the war, symbolised by Kitchener's continued occupation of the War Office, the new year provided an assortment of trivial grievances, all of which hardened Long's attitude against Asquith as leader of a nation at war.[2] Clearly, he would continue to support Asquith only until such time as an alternative leader might emerge.

The Local Government Board was a department with whose functions and conventions Long was thoroughly familiar; he had been its servant, in the capacity of both parliamentary

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[1] See Long to Bonar Law, two letters dated 20 Dec. 1915, one for Law only and one to be passed to Asquith, B.L.P., 52/1/46. The fact that this second letter is to be found amongst Law's papers, and not amongst Asquith's, suggests that it never found its way to the prime minister. For Long's views on Irish Unionist attitudes to the coalition see W.L.P., WRO 947/271.

[2] A memorandum dated 24 Jan. 1916 provides adequate testimony to Long's mounting irritation: he objected to the Honours List on the ground that Conservatives did not receive their due; he disliked the promotion of Leverton Harris to the Privy Council; he opposed the election of Admiral Sir Hedworth Meux at Portsmouth, insisting that a Unionist should have been given the seat - Meux had last contested a seat at Newcastle in 1900, when he had stood as a Liberal. Long's memorandum may be found in B.L.P., 52/2/46.

secretary and President, on two previous occasions. The appointment neither reflected Long's seniority nor satisfied his ambition. For the most part the work was administrative: it filled Long's time, but offered scant reward to a politician who had proved his administrative competence over a decade earlier.

There was, however, one area in which Long was able to exercise considerable influence over war policy. This was the question of conscription,[1] and here Long proved adept at tailoring government policy to the political dummy of the moment. He had been an advocate of compulsory national service even in peacetime and it is hardly surprising that he pushed for 'Mobilization of the Nation' - Long always preferred this term, with its connotations of military and civilian service, to the more usual 'conscription' or 'compulsion' - from the moment that war began. Regardless of the military situation Long believed that conscription was a necessary mark of the government's commitment to fight the war to the end. He also argued for compulsion on simple grounds of economy: it was

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[1] There have been numerous studies of the battle over conscription during the First World War. Denis Hayes, Conscription Conflict (London, 1949), is useful, though now outdated. The Derby Scheme has been considered by Roy Douglas, 'Voluntary Enlistment in the First World War', Journal of Modern History 42 (1970), as well as by Randolph Churchill in Lord Derby, King of Lancashire. John Rae, Conscience and Politics (London, 1970), although concentrating on the experience of the conscientious objector, gives a thorough account of the work of the Local Government Board, and Dr John Stubbs provides a comprehensive and scholarly account of the political genesis of the Military Service Acts in 'The Conservative Party and the Politics of War'.

cheaper to take single men than married men; it was ludicrous to allow married men to enlist, obliging the government to pay separation allowances as well as gratuities and pensions in the event of death or injury, whilst single men stayed at home.

But although Long was a keen supporter of conscription he was always aware that the ramifications of compulsion reached far beyond the mere supply of men for the military. It was for this reason that, as the member of Asquith's cabinet directly responsible for manpower, Long frequently allowed his own views to be overridden by political considerations. He took care to distance himself from the more extreme advocates of national service, namely Milner, Amery, F.S. Oliver and their supporters, regarding their approach as politically naive.

The compulsionists in the cabinet were most strongly represented by the somewhat curious alliance of Long, Curzon and Lloyd George. Their first victory was over the setting up of a register to enable the government to calculate the number of men who would be available in the future should conscription be decided upon. On 3 June 1915 Long circulated a draft National Registration Bill, pressing his colleagues to agree on 'a atrong and simple scheme of mobilisation of the nation.'[1] There was strong opposition in the cabinet, but as Long repeatedly emphasised that there were no military requirements whatsoever in the

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[1]Note by Long, 3 June 1915, P.R.O., CAB 37/129/8; David Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 6 Vols. (London, 1933-36), 2, 716-7.

proposed legislation it was decided to proceed._ Long's Bill was placed before parliament on 5 July; it was carried by a large majority. By the end of the month the National Register had been set up, a first step on the road to conscription.

Although Long reassured the prime minister on 18 July that he had no intention of orchestrating a campaign for conscription,[1] he was far from satisfied and thought that the autumn would be a good time to announce a decision in favour of compulsion. Long was sure that opposition in the country would be a lot less vocal than amongst Liberal MPs. By August he had prepared a confidential cabinet memorandum in which he stated his views forcefully. After listing clearly all the arguments in favour of compulsion, Long's ratiocination concluded with the observation that 'voluntaryism fails when it places square pegs in round holes.'[2] This memorandum was not circulated, on the advice of Lord Lansdowne, who pressed Asquith on the same subject that very day, 5 August, and who thought it wise to wait before making a fuss.[3] Bonar Law, too, requested Long to hold his memorandum back, at least for the time being.[4] This hesitation on Long's part stemmed not from any reluctance to rock the boat, but from the realisation that the House of Commons might refuse to

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[1]See Long to Asquith, copy, 18 July 1915, L.P., Add. MS. 62404.

[2]Memorandum by Long, 5 Aug. 1915, W.L.P., WRO 947/497.

[3]Lansdowne to Long, 5 Aug. 1915, ibid.

[4]Bonar Law to Long, 6 Aug. 1915, ibid.

endorse compulsion unless and until the War Office declared that the voluntary system was not producing enough men. Arguments concerning the moral obligation of all citizens during wartime and the economic allocation of manpower might not on their own be sufficient, a fact which Long himself acknowledged a month later.[1] He preferred to bide his time than to risk defeat.

In tacit recognition of the pressure which Long and his fellow-compulsionists were exerting, Asquith appointed Lord Derby Director of Recruiting on 5 October. As Vice-President of the National Service League since 1904, Derby's appointment has justly been described as 'an exceedingly astute political move by Asquith; it spiked the public guns of the compulsionists for over two months.'[2] It also gave rise to the Derby Scheme, a canvas of all men of military age carried out during October and November 1915.[3] But the compulsionists tried to force Asquith's hand, meeting at Curzon's house on 14 October

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[1] See Long to Curzon, copy, 19 Sept. 1915, ibid.

[2] Stubbs, 'Conservative Party and the Politics of War', p. 248.

[3] A 'Joint Recruiting Committee,' using the information collected by Long's National Register, asked every man between the ages of eighteen and forty-one, and resident in England, Wales or Scotland, to pledge himself to volunteer when called upon. They were divided into three groups according to age and maritdl status. Young, single men were to be the first to be asked to honour their pledge. Those men who took the pledge were known as 'attested men'. The Derby Scheme has been described as 'one of those shot-gun weddings between the fair maid of Liberal idealism and the ogre of Tory militarism ... for which Asquith's last ministry provided peculiarly efficient brokerage.' Arthur Marwick, The Deluge: British Society and the First World War (London, 1965), p. 77.

to decide a joint strategy.[1] Faced with the threat of Unionist withdrawal from the government, probably supported by Churchill and Lloyd George, Asquith acceded to the compulsionists' demands: the Derby Scheme would be given six weeks, then there would be conscription.

Nor did Long have much time for the proposal to raise more recruits by having the King make a personal appeal. This, he believed, was shirking the issue and could at best result in 'a temporary spurt which would lead to false conclusions ...'[2] Long also pointed out to Lord Stamfordham, the King's principal private secretary, that George V risked making an appeal only to suffer the ignominy of failing to obtain the necessary men.

By December compulsion had become the price which Asquith must pay if he wished to hold his cabinet together. Long was therefore placed in charge of a cabinet committee and instructed to draft a bill for the conscription of single men. On 28 December the cabinet approved the bill, with McKenna and Runciman immediately announcing their intention

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[1]Long certainly attended this meeting, as he explained his presence in a letter to Bonar Law dated 17 Oct. 1915, B.L.P., 51/4/18. See also Petrie, Walter Long, pp. 202-3; Winston Churchill, in The World Crisis, 6 Vols. (London, 1923-31), 3, 238, asserted that there were nine at the meeting, and John Stubbs, 'Conservative Party and the Politics of War', pp. 252-3, has concluded that eight of the nine were Long, Lloyd George, Curzon, Churchill, Bonar Law, Lansdowne, Selborne and Austen Chamberlain. The author admits that this identification is 'partly guesswork', and it is certainly curious that Long should have found it necessary three days later to explain his reasons for attending to Bonar Law if both men had been present.

[2]Long to Stamfordham, copy, 15 Oct. 1915, W.L.P., WRO 947/497.

to resign. Long wrote privately: 'We hear that Simon, McKenna and Runciman mean to resign, I don't believe it, but I don't care if the first two do, they would be no loss. I should be sorry for Runciman's loss, he is a very capable man ...'[1] In the event, only Simon resigned, but Long still did not get the Home Office.

Just three weeks after the cabinet committee's appointment, on 5 January 1916, Long's Military Service Bill was presented to parliament. Much to Long's disappointment the bill did not include Ireland, for Asquith preferred to upset his Conservative colleagues and the Irish Unionists than risk trouble in the Commons from the Nationalists and in Ireland from the Roman Catholic Church. It fell to Long to handle the bill in the House, a task which, it was almost universally agreed, he performed with rare parliamentary skill and tact. The Military Service Act, applying only to single men and containing provision for appeal by conscientious objectors, came into effect on 1 March. For Long, as for many in the Conservative party, it was not enough: it was a political compromise conceded by a prime minister who had no choice. The compulsionists would be satisfied only when a general scheme of military service had been put into operation.

Yet Long was aware that conscription carried problems of its own, and he saw universal military service as only

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[1]Long to Lady Londonderry, 29 Dec. 1915, L.L.P., D/Lo/C 666(283).

a part of a thorough overhaul of the recruiting system. He recommended special re-engagement terms for men with previous service, a special 'fast promotion' scheme for officers of the regular Army, improved training facilities, and changes in personnel at the War Office. Above all, Long was worried that the introduction of conscription would encourage a spirit of amateurism in the Army. On 3 February 1916 he told Asquith that whatever the exigencies of war the government could never be justified 'in sending out crowds of men whose only claim to be called soldiers is that they are dressed in khaki.'[1] Moreover, 'to send soldiers who are unfit to lead is not only unjust to them but is very little short of murder ...'[2]

Pressure for general compulsion continued to build up on Asquith throughout the spring of 1916. By April the Army Council, at the behest of General Robertson, himself acting in collusion with Lloyd George, was prepared to state that universal conscription was now essential. Long, meanwhile, had rallied his backbench support, and on 9 April he stated his demands to the prime minister:

> We must have more compulsion. We must take single men first. We must next take younger married men with smaller encumbrances. We must popularise the Army, do justice to officers of all kinds. We must give increased pay or a bonus to re-engaged men.[3]

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[1]Memorandum by Long, 3 Feb. 1916, A.P., MS Asquith 124/53-8.
[2]Ibid.
[3]Long to Asquith, 9 Apr. 1916, A.P., MS Asquith 30/11.

Long also believed that the root of the trouble lay with War Office methods of recruitment, as did Lord Derby.[1] Of Kitchener Long remarked: 'It is always the same with him, he won't wait and consider a question quietly and give a deliberate opinion about it, but jumps in with his "Yes" or "No" and so entirely destroys his authority in Cabinet.'[2]

Convinced that he faced a party revolt fanned by Long, Bonar Law told Asquith that the government would have to proceed with general compulsion. The prime minister now had to contend with the opposition of the Army Council, Milner in the Lords, Carson, who had resigned from the government in November 1915, in the Commons, and Long, Lloyd George and Bonar Law in the cabinet. Despite these seemingly overwhelming odds Asquith managed to cobble together another compromise: compulsion would be adopted only if existing measures failed to provide 50,000 men by 27 May and 15,000 per week thereafter.[3]

These proposals were discussed in a secret session of the Commons on 25 and 26 April, with Long acting as government spokesman on the second day. His heart was not in it: he made an unusually disastrous speech.[4] When, on the next day, he tried to introduce the government's

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[1]For Derby's dissatisfaction with recruiting methods see Derby to Asquith, 13 Mar., 14 Mar., and 23 Mar. 1916, and Derby to Long, 26 Mar. and 27 Mar. 1916, W.L.P., WRO 947/497.

[2]Long to French, copy, 20 Apr. 1916, ibid.

[3]Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 2, 730-1; Stubbs, 'Conservative Party and the Politics of War', pp. 309-10.

[4]See Austen Chamberlain to Mrs. Chamberlain, 26 Apr. 1916, A.C.P., AC 6/1/201.

proposals he was howled down by an extremely hostile opposition, led by Carson. Leo Amery condemned the measure as 'a most absurd, ramshackle Bill',[1] a description with which Long privately would have agreed. As government spokesman he found himself obliged to defend a position which he knew to be indefensible. He had both expected and hoped for serious parliamentary opposition, opposition which would force Asquith to give in.[2]

After this parliamentary 'débâcle' Long suggested that Asquith seriously consider reconstructing the government and calling it 'National'.[3] Finally, on the 29th, Asquith accepted that he was beaten: the cabinet decided to introduce general conscription at the earliest possible date. It again fell to Long to take charge in the Commons, a task which he accepted readily. On 25 May 1916 the second Military Service Act became law. For the first time since the days of Oliver Cromwell there was general military compulsion in Britain.[4]

Until Asquith's government fell in December 1916 it became Long's duty to administer the legislation. By far

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[1] Amery Diaries: Volume One, 27 Apr. 1916, p. 128.

[2] Austen Chamberlain reported to his wife that 'Asquith and Long regarded the battle as lost before the forces engaged ...' See Austen Chamberlain to Mrs. Chamberlain, 28 Apr. 1916, A.C.P., AC 6/1/204.

[3] Long to Asquith, copy, 28 Apr. 1916, W.L.P., WRO 947/497.

[4] Both sides during the English civil war practised impressment. After the Restoration of 1660 an obligation to serve in the Militia remained, but the actual numbers who served were determined by parish quotas and a system of ballots. The wars of the eighteenth and nineteenth century were all fought by volunteers. A detailed study of the passage of the two Military Service Bills through parliament can be found in John Rae, Conscience and Politics, pp. 22-52.

the most thorny problem was that of dealing with conscientious objectors. Long believed personally that all citizens were obliged to serve their country, militarily if the state so demanded, in time of war, but he was pragmatic enough to recognise that if Asquith was to retain the support of the Liberal backbenches, then the Military Service Act must contain provision for conscientious objection. Having accepted this necessity, Long did his best to deal with conscientious objectors with total impartiality and precisely within the terms of the Act. He was the recipient of much criticism directed against the partiality and prejudice of the local tribunals empowered to hear individual cases. Often he concluded that the tribunal's findings were not consistent with the wording of the Act, with the government's intentions, and even with the directions of the Local Government Board issued under his own authority. Some measure of Long's difficulties can be gleaned from the fact that on 27 March he felt it necessary to convene a conference of all appeal tribunal chairmen at which he stated categorically that absolute exemption could, under the terms of the Act, be granted on purely conscientious grounds. Yet some local tribunals continued to flout the law; Long could do nothing about it.[1]

A recent student of conscientious objection during the First World War has concluded that Long brought to the problem 'a desire above all to be fair.... Long's

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[1]Ibid., pp. 119-23.

achievement was to establish by his own example an impartial and common sense approach to the discussions ...; it was characteristic of his attitude that when it was suggested that no one with strong anti-conscriptionist views should be appointed to the tribunals, he replied that in that case he would be compelled to bar anybody who held views in favour of compulsory military service.'[1] Long's mistake, it has been suggested, was to put his faith in the good judgement of local bodies.[2] After the war he regretted both that the government had allowed any exemptions and that local tribunals had been permitted to decide doubtful cases.[3]

On 5 June 1916 the "Hampshire" was sunk and Lord Kitchener was drowned, the only British cabinet minister to perish during the war as a direct consequence of enemy action. This sudden tragedy raised the question of his replacement. Sir Max Aitken is supposed to have overheard the generals at the War Office planning to propose Long or 'some second rate politician who could be trusted not to have a mind of his own' as Kitchener's successor.[4] This

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[1]Ibid., pp. 40-2. [2]Ibid., pp. 44-5.
[3]Memories, pp. 221-6.

[4]Taylor, Beaverbrook, p. 97. This story, like most of Beaverbrook's from this period, seems to have originated with Bonar Law. On Christmas Day 1916 Lord Riddell recorded that Bonar Law recalled that it was Robertson's idea that Long would prove a weak Secretary of State for War. According to Riddell, Law promptly telephoned Asquith and threatened to resign if Long was given the job (see Riddell, War Diary, pp. 234-5). A fuller version crops up over two years later in a conversation between Bonar Law and Riddell on 4 May 1919. Bonar Law said, 'I remember that when K. left, Robertson wanted to get someone plastic at the War Office whom he could handle as he liked. His idea was Walter Long. I telephoned

story is extraordinary, for whatever the generals thought of Long's talents as a politician they would have known very well that he was the last man to prove reluctant to assert himself. If the generals had been looking for a pliable Secretary of State, then Long would not have entered into their deliberations. Indeed, if the generals ever considered Long it is more likely that they did so in the knowledge that he would be an unfailing critic of Asquith's half-hearted measures, a capable administrator, and a determined advocate of all means deemed necessary to win the war.

What is clear, however, is that Long was bitterly opposed to the suggestion that Lloyd George should have the War Office with plenary powers, and he urged Asquith

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to Asquith saying that I wished to see him. I told him that if he appointed Long I should resign. I said, "You must appoint L.G. He wants the job and you will have to give it to him. You had better do it with good grace.... If you stand in his way he will probably crush you."' See Lord Riddell, Lord Riddell's Intimate Diary of the Peace Conference and After, 1918-1923 (London, 1933), p. 68. Obviously Bonar Law made the same boast to Beaverbrook, but such decisiveness is not characteristic of Bonar Law, nor is it easy to imagine him addressing Asquith in such terms. Balfour was under the impression that Asquith was also considering Austen Chamberlain for the job, but that Law intervened on the ground that this would be a slight to himself (see Egremont, Balfour, p. 277). This is much more likely: Law was always very sensitive about his own position and on several occasions objected to some distinction being conferred on his Conservative colleagues on the ground that his own position as leader would be compromised. It is possible that Asquith considered both Long and Chamberlain for the job - both, after all, had far more administrative experience than Bonar Law and both commanded a greater personal following in the Commons. But apart from Bonar Law's unlikely story, there is no evidence to suggest that Long was seriously considered for the War Office in June 1916, nor does Beaverbrook's story about the generals, faithfully retold by his biographer, Mr A.J.P. Taylor, deserve much credence.

to take over himself, as he had done after the Curragh fiasco in 1914, with Lord Derby as his second in command.[1] He also wrote to Lord Stamfordham to say that Lloyd George's appointment would be 'disastrous'.[2] In fact, unknown to Long, the appointment had already been settled, though Lloyd George was still bargaining for extensive powers, and on the very day that Long was deprecating the appointment to Stamfordham, Lloyd George formally rejected the post in a letter to Asquith. This, of course, was bluff, part of Lloyd George's strategy to attain greater powers. On the evening of 17 June Stamfordham duly reported to the King that Lloyd George's demands went beyond what 'a unanimous Cabinet would sanction'[3] and in the end Lloyd George had to accept office without any of the additional powers which he wanted. The appointment was announced on 6 July. Margot Asquith wrote in her diary: 'We are out.'[4]

Long's role in the Asquith coalition was far from unimportant. He worked assiduously and competently at the Local Government Board. He took a leading role in the battle for conscription, and when the battle was won

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[1]See Long to Asquith, copy, 10 June 1916, W.L.P., WRO 947/497.

[2]Churchill, Lord Derby, p. 211.

[3]Stamfordham to the King, 17 June 1916, quoted ibid.

[4]Margot Asquith, More Memories (London, 1933), p. 199.

he framed two Military Service Bills, both of which contained provisions for conscientious objection which were inimical to his own convictions. He then administered those provisions without bias or prejudice. J.C.C. Davidson, Bonar Law's private secretary and not usually an unqualified admirer of Long, testified to the efficiency of his work, especially in the area of recruitment. At the end of April 1916 Davidson wrote privately to a friend:

> Mr. Long ... has combed 300,000 single men from various starred trades and has replaced them by married men. If he had not worked so energetically and loyally it is doubtful whether the Army requirements would have been reached. It is almost pathetic to think that he has really cut the feet from under his Unionist colleagues in this matter.[1]

Long was also a valuable parliamentary asset to the government. His command over the Conservative backbenches was crucial to the continuation of Asquith's premiership. Disgruntled Tory MPs would have broken into open revolt at a word from Long. On only one occasion, the debates of 25-27 April over the government's last-ditch proposals to avoid general compulsion, did Long lose the support of the Unionist backbenches. Yet here he was playing a parliamentary pantomime: he knew that if he could display to Asquith that Conservative Members were on the brink of

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[1]Robert Rhodes James, Memoirs of a Conservative: J.C.C. Davidson's Memoirs and Papers, 1910-37 (London, 1969), p. 40.

open revolt even when he, Long, addressed the House, then Asquith would have to concede. He managed the two Military Service Bills with considerable parliamentary finesse. John Dillon, again not one of Long's usual admirers, told the Commons on 20 January 1916 that he had 'never seen a Bill which might easily have led to passionate and heated debate, conducted with greater skill and in a more conciliatory manner ...'[1]

Despite his earlier hostility to the idea of coalition, Long had come to accept that a broad-based government was essential for at least the duration of the war and possibly for some time afterwards. When, in April 1916, his old confidant, Lady Londonderry, criticised his participation in the government Long dashed off a petulant reply which shows just how much his attitude had changed from only a year earlier:

> I am sorry you should be so hostile to the Coalition, it is the only form of Gov. which can hope to finish the war. Forgive me for saying I should have thought you of all people would have appreciated the immense difficulties and responsibilities of some of your old friends and been able to subordinate your personal animosities.[2]

Yet Long's loyalty to Asquith could never be taken for granted: he remained a member of a government to which he felt no real allegiance. Some issues still rankled.

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[1] 78 H.C.Deb. ser.5.col. 760.

[2] Long to Lady Londonderry, 19 Apr. 1916, L.L.P., D/Lo/C 666(266).

In may 1916 he was still trying to persuade Bonar Law to induce Asquith to make the balance of the parties in the cabinet more equal. He also professed a conversion to the merits of a small war cabinet,[1] and he constantly felt that the government was not taking as strong or as efficient a line in running the war as it should. But it was the government's proposed Irish policy in the aftermath of the Easter Rising which both focused and intensified Long's barely concealed hostility towards Asquith's leadership. The cabinet crisis over Ireland in the summer of 1916 forced Long out into the open as Asquith's leading detractor within the coalition, so that by December, when Lloyd George emerged as the man who could win the war, Long felt a sense of neither loyalty nor obligation towards Asquith.

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[1]See Long to Bonar Law, copy, 24 May 1916, W.L.P., WRO 947/497.

CHAPTER FIVE

AN IRISH INTERLUDE, 1916

On Easter Monday, 25 April 1916, the Irish Republic was proclaimed by a gang of nationalist martyrs whose ability to enforce their writ stretched no further than the General Post Office in Dublin. Irish affairs once again obtruded on British politics. The government's reaction was swift and devastating: General Maxwell was given plenary powers. By Friday the rebels had had enough, and the Irish Republic fizzled out in humiliating surrender. The ringleaders were rounded up and all, save Eamonn de Valera, were shot as traitors. So ended the Easter Rebellion. The political ramifications at Westminster, however, were only just beginning.

Despite the party truce over home rule, and although preoccupied with his war work, Long kept abreast of developments in Ireland. He was aware, as Augustine Birrell should have been, that the tide of extreme nationalism was flowing inexorably in the direction of a futile yet bloody gesture of republican independence. As early as 30 December 1914 Long described the potential dangers to Lord Lansdowne, emphasising that British authority was being openly flouted by journalism, pamphleteering and platform oratory. He recommended that the leaders be court-martialled under the Defence of the Realm Act and

that the Irish government take immediate steps to suppress seditious meetings. In wartime, Long contended, the government could ill afford to tolerate treasonous behaviour:

> The position is, in short, that the City of Dublin now lies at the mercy of an irresponsible mob of armed rebels and that the Civil Executive is deliberately shirking the responsibility of dealing with them in the only possible way - i.e. by military suppression. This must be done sooner or later, and the longer it is deferred the more trouble it will be.
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> ... The extreme party in the South and West of Ireland, though numerically few, is, in time of war, a serious menace to the State, and should be peremptorily put down
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> ... The question of a German raid on the West Coast of Ireland may seem far-fetched and not at present within practical consideration. But there is no impossibility of such a raid under circumstances which may yet arise. If it did take place, everywhere on the West Coast an invading army would find sympathy if not active help from the Sinn Fein and extreme party ...
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> In conclusion, the time is ripe for vigorous military action against Irish sedition, and this action should begin in Dublin.[1]

This prophetic memorandum was written, it should be noted, a full fifteen months before the Easter Rising.

Long did not rely on official sources for information on Ireland. From December 1915 onwards a friend, an employee of Longford County Council, furnished him with a

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[1]Memorandum by Long, 30 Dec. 1914, Lord Lansdowne Papers, Bowood House, Calne, Wiltshire.

vast quantity of papers relating to voluntary recruitment, the state of the country and the weakness of Birrell's regime.[1] Between January and March 1916 Long obtained detailed reports for thirteen counties in an attempt to gauge the extent of support for Redmond, O'Brien and Sinn Fein, and of likely opposition to any attempt by the government to introduce conscription. He concluded that support for Sinn Fein was increasing in virtually all counties. These reports represent an intelligent attempt by Long to find out for himself about the state of Irish opinion.[2] Consequently, the Easter Rising was not quite such a rude awakening for Long as it was for most of his cabinet colleagues.

His reaction to the news of the rebellion was characteristically firm. He made it clear from the start that he expected to be consulted and that he would consider resignation if the government tried to impose an Irish

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[1]This friend was James Mackay Wilson, an Honorary Secretary to the Irish Unionist Alliance, 1918-20. The papers which he sent to Long, mainly memoranda, letters, republican propaganda, and press cuttings, may be found in W.L.P., WRO 947/388/1.

[2]The Reports, together with two covering letters from Wilson, can be found in ibid., WRO 947/388/2. They cover the following counties: Sligo, Mayo, Galway, Limerick, Roscommon, Leitrim, Longford, Kerry, Clare, Cork, Wexford, Tipperary and Waterford. Wilson visited each of the counties to conduct interviews with whoever he could find prepared to answer his questions. The interviewees range from large landowners through professional people to labourers. They include academics, solicitors, Roman Catholic clergy, small businessmen, shopkeepers, hotel staff and publicans. For the most part - as would be expected from such a diverse group - opinions were contradictory, though there was a clear trend away from Redmond and O'Brien and towards Sinn Fein amongst those of nationalist persuasion.

policy with which he disagreed. On 2 May he warned Bonar Law in no uncertain terms:

> I desire to express the hope that two questions will not be settled without my being allowed to have my say.
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> 1. The duration of martial law in Ireland.
> 2. The reconstitution of the Irish executive.
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> ... I could not remain a member of the Gov. if these questions are settled in a manner which I could not support and without my being allowed to air my views.[1]

As yet, there had been no hint of any attempt being made at a negotiated settlement. Asquith decided to assess the situation in Dublin for himself, telling the House of Commons on 11 May that he planned to visit Ireland to consult personally with the civil and military authorities.[2] For some months Long had been pushing in cabinet to have Ireland included in a scheme of general compulsion, and he now argued that the rebellion reinforced his case. He recommended that the Military Service Bill, which he was currently preparing, include Ireland, the Army first taking steps to round up all arms so as to prevent any violent opposition from nationalist dissidents.[3]

The story of the failure of the proposed home rule scheme which followed the quelling of the rebellion has been told many times. Long has invariably been portrayed as a wrecker, an implacable foe of home rule, an enemy

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[1] Long to Bonar Law, 2 May 1916, B.L.P., 53/2/3.

[2] 82 H.C.Deb. ser.5 cols. 959-60.

[3] See memorandum by Long, 8 May 1916, W.L.P., WRO 947/402/23. This memorandum was sent to Asquith, Bonar Law and Lansdowne.

within the cabinet who successfully thwarted the last feasible chance which a British government had to settle the Irish question by peaceable means. This interpretation leaves much to be desired. It has been seen that by the summer of 1914 Long had accepted that some grant of home rule would be necessary; he never again deviated from this position. In February 1915, for example, the under-secretary at Dublin Castle, Sir Matthew Nathan, remarked that he found Long very conciliatory over Ireland and 'ready to counsel accommodation.'[1]

There is no evidence that Asquith had even a tentative plan in mind when he visited Dublin. Lloyd George thought that he had gone simply to avoid parliamentary difficulties and that he intended to do nothing.[2] On his return, however, the prime minister decided to ask Lloyd George to conduct negotiations between the Irish leaders. Long raised no objection to this, though he did make it clear that he favoured strong government and no experiments for the moment, least of all home rule.[3] Unionist backbenchers naturally demanded that Long be appointed to succeed Birrell as soon as martial law could be dispensed with. Asquith did not receive this proposal favourably.[4] Instead, he offered the post of Chief Secretary to Lloyd George on

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[1]Hobhouse's diary, 3 Feb. 1915, Diaries of Charles Hobhouse, p. 220.

[2]Riddell, War Diary, p. 183; Christopher Addison, Four and a Half Years, 2 Vols. (London, 1934), 1, 212.

[3]Cabinet memorandum by Long, 19 May 1916, B.L.P., 63/C/6.

[4]Roy Jenkins, Asquith (Revised edition: London, 1978), p. 397.

22 May.[1] Lloyd George declined, agreeing only to act as the government's chief Irish negotiator, and Asquith decided to appoint no one for the time being, though F.E. Smith and Carson were also considered.[2]

Contrary to his reputation, Long was, in fact, fully in favour of Lloyd George opening discussions with the Irish leaders. He even wrote on the 23rd to tell him so.[3] But the cabinet had only empowered Lloyd George to initiate talks, offer suggestions and report back. It had not given him plenipotentiary powers, nor had it pledged itself to support any scheme provisionally agreed between Lloyd George and the Irish leaders. Long was fully in favour of an attempt being made; he was not in favour of Lloyd George's arrogation of powers which the cabinet had never delegated. On 24 May the cabinet approved Lloyd George's appointment as a mediator only.

Over the next few days Lloyd George managed to secure the agreement of both Carson and Redmond to a settlement which differed little from what Asquith had promised in 1914: home rule with exclusion for a six county Ulster. Southern Unionists were not so conciliatory. Following Long's advice, Lloyd George met George Stewart, vice-chairman of the Irish Unionist Alliance, and Lord Midleton on the 29th, both of whom made it plain that they felt let

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[1]Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 2, 149; Colvin, Life of Carson, 3, 163.

[2]D.G. Boyce and Cameron Hazlehurst, 'The Unknown Chief Secretary: H.E. Duke and Ireland, 1916-18', Irish Historical Studies 20 (1977), p. 288.

[3]Long to Lloyd George, 23 May 1916, L.G.P., D/14/1/9.

down by the government and could not contemplate any scheme of home rule whilst the war remained to be won. The Southern loyalists' response naturally gave encouragement to Long's growing sense of unease.[1]

On the following day, 30 May, Long visited Lloyd George's office at 10.30 a.m. and was for the first time shown a rough draft of the proposed scheme. He immediately objected to the suggestion that Ulster's exclusion would be subject to revision at a later date and that a parliament should be set up as soon as possible to govern the remainder of Ireland. He told Lloyd George that he could countenance neither proposal, but further discussion was cut short by the arrival of Redmond. Things moved fast. Immediately after the meeting Long saw Lansdowne and they together went through their objections and considered a plan of attack. At 6 p.m. Lansdowne went off to remonstrate with Lloyd George.[2]

Asquith had blundered in failing to prepare the ground for a settlement, and he now paid the penalty. On the next day, Thursday 1 June, together with Lloyd George and Lord Crewe, he met Lansdowne and Long to discuss the scheme. The two opponents suggested that the plan be quietly dropped, good government restored in Ireland, and then, perhaps, some settlement could be devised. Long knew that Carson and Redmond had somehow been deceived - he did not

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[1]Patrick Buckland, Irish Unionism: One: The Anglo-Irish and the New Ireland (Dublin, 1972), pp. 57-60.

[2]Memorandum by Long, 15 June 1916, detailing the sequence of events and marked 'For Circulation to Unionist Members of the Cabinet only', W.L.P., WRO 947/402/5

yet understand exactly how - and he believed that the Irish leaders would change their tune after putting the draft proposals to their followers. He also thought, correctly, that Bonar Law had rather naively lent his name to a plan which the bulk of the Conservative party would refuse to accept.

Writing to Lansdowne on 3 June, Long commented that Bonar Law had 'no actual knowledge of the country' and was 'mainly dependent on Carson for his views'.[1] So far there had been no public opposition, but on 6 June members of both Houses passed a resolution condemning any immediate grant of home rule.[2] Four days later Redmond made the terms of the settlement public, even telling the press that Lloyd George's plan had the full approval of the government. This was too much for Long. He sent an abrupt telegram to the prime minister: 'Regret impossible to accept situation as it is. Am coming up tonight.'[3] Realising that his scheme was in danger of foundering, Lloyd George then issued a rather unconvincing threat of resignation and accused Long of disloyalty. Long merely responded by making it clear that he resented the way in which Lloyd George pretended to have been given a 'blank cheque' in Irish affairs by the cabinet. He refuted all of Lloyd George's accusations and deprecated the resignation

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[1]Long to Lansdowne, copy, 3 June 1916, ibid., WRO 947/268.

[2]Copy of Resolution of 6 June 1916 passed by members of both Houses, B.L.P., 53/3/3.

[3]Long to Asquith, cipher telegram, 12 June 1916, A.P., MS. Asquith 16/191.

threat.[1] He was furious with reports in that day's newspapers that Lloyd George had been 'unanimously asked by all his colleagues to undertake the task of endeavouring to settle the Irish question immediately ...'[2] Long then complained to Asquith about Lloyd George's behaviour. He still hoped to avoid a full-scale cabinet crisis: 'I am very sorry for all this trouble about Ireland but really I am not to blame. I think I have been very badly treated.'[3]

If Long had accepted that some grant of home rule would be necessary, why was he so hostile to Lloyd George's proposals? His opposition was based on a number of assumptions. First, an immediate grant of an Irish parliament would settle nothing, but merely encourage Sinn Fein extremists in the belief that force brought dividends. Second, the proposals would satisfy nobody. They had been accepted by the Ulster Unionists on the understanding that the six counties would be permanently excluded, but the Nationalists had been deceived into believing that partition would be shortlived. This deliberate trickery, Long asserted, was merely storing up trouble for the future. Third, Lloyd George's proposals reserved control of the military and the police for Westminster. In the event of another violent outbreak it would be Britain alone which would have to take action.

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[1] See Lloyd George to Long, 12 June 1916, and Long to Lloyd George, copy, 12 June 1916, W.L.P., WRO 947/283.

[2] The Times, 12 June 1916.

[3] Long to Asquith, 13 June 1916, A.P., MS. Asquith 16/193-4.

Sinn Fein had already demanded the cessation of martial law and more lenient treatment for the rebels. It was likely that a future Irish parliament would set itself against Westminster if strong security measures ever again became necessary. Thus, home rule could only safely be granted once extreme republican nationalism had been extirpated and a more favourable climate of opinion engendered.[1] These arguments were both cogent and practical: by highlighting the difficult position in which Westminster could soon find itself, Long did much to undermine the view that Lloyd George's proposals represented a workable solution.

He was also opposed to the suggestion that an Imperial conference, let alone a peace conference after the war, should endeavour to settle the future government of Ireland. The question was one of bitter domestic controversy which, he maintained, it was the responsibility of Westminster to decide. The government should brook no interference from outside, neither from the Dominions nor from the United States.[2] The scheme, Long insisted, had never been adequately discussed in cabinet and the reasons used to gain the Ulster leaders' concurrence - Lloyd George had told Carson that the 'national emergency' and the fear of 'complications with America' made an immediate grant of home rule essential - were without foundation anyway.[3]

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[1]Memorandum by Long, n.d., W.L.P., WRO 947/402/2.
[2]Ibid.
[3]Memorandum by Long, n.d., W.L.P., WRO 947/402/18.

But Long's strongest argument was that the proposed settlement would be regarded as a atepping stone to complete independence; it would do nothing to satisfy the demands of the extremists in Ireland, whose support was continuing to increase. As Long pointed out, the plan was unworkable because it was being portrayed as another example of British perfidy, its acceptance a betrayal by the Irish parliamentary party: 'England ... naturally does not want to enter a Peace Congress', the Sinn Fein extremists contended,

> with the blood of Irish martyrs dripping from her hands. She is ... trying to force an absolutely worthless settlement on the Irish people, with the connivance of the renegade Irish representatives, while the bravest of our race have been shot in the streets of Dublin, or have been murdered under the name of English justice, or languish in prison in a foreign land.[1]

What, asked Long, was the point of conceding home rule in the face of this kind of hostility?

By 15 June Long was making it known both to his cabinet colleagues and to his backbench followers that he would, if necessary, resign over the issue. Lloyd George, he averred, had overstepped his authority:

> The task which Mr. Lloyd George was asked to undertake was to secure some basis of agreement among all Irish Unionists which would lead to the acceptance of Home

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[1]From a leaflet distributed at a meeting held in Cork by O'Brien and Healy on 23 June 1916, a copy of which was sent to Long on 30 June by Walter Guinness, ibid., WRO 947/402/26.

Rule at the end of the war without bloodshed ...[1]

Long and Lansdowne began to rally their forces, and on 17 June the Unionist members of the cabinet met at Curzon's house to discuss Lloyd George's proposals. Later that day Curzon and Lord Robert Cecil saw Asquith to express their disquiet and to request the prime minister to issue a statement to the effect that Lloyd George's plans did not have the unanimous support of the government. Asquith prevaricated but agreed that Lloyd George should have submitted his ideas to the cabinet for approval, revision or rejection.[2] As a result of this meeting the full proposals were officially circulated to the cabinet the next day, and on the 19th Long told Bonar Law that he would not 'be a party to the setting up of any form of H.R. during the war.'[3] As MPs and ministers returned to Westminster for the re-opening of parliament on 20 June a serious cabinet crisis over Ireland was in full swing. Lloyd George was reduced to complaining bitterly to John Dillon about Long's 'specially treacherous manner'.[4]

Over the next few days Long and Lansdowne bombarded

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[1]Memorandum by Long, 15 June 1916, A.C.P., AC 14/5/13; B.P., Add. MS. 49777 (Long's underlining).

[2]Memorandum by Lord Robert Cecil, 17 June 1916, A.C.P., AC 14/5/20; E.S.P., MS. Selborne 80/196-7.

[3]Long to Bonar Law, 19 June 1916, B.L.P., 53/3/2.

[4]Lloyd George wrote to Dillon on 20 June 1916: 'Long has behaved in a specially treacherous manner. He has actually been engaged clandestinely in trying to undermine the influence of Carson in Ulster.... I should not think it possible that any man, least of all one with such pretensions of being an English gentleman, could have acted in such a way.' Quoted in F.S.L. Lyons, John Dillon (London, 1968), p. 396.

their cabinet colleagues with memoranda employing every conceivable argument against the scheme,[1] and Austen Chamberlain even told the prime minister that his 'failure to call the Cabinet together, and to consult them, has produced a division of opinion which might ... have been averted ...'[2] By 26 June Lord Hugh Cecil had told his leader that he intended to make a fight of it,[3] and Lord Midleton promised that vigorous opposition could be expected from the Southern Unionists.[4] Lloyd George, however, thought that Long's resignation threat was bluff, for he bet Asquith a box of cigars that Long would stay.[5]

On the following day the cabinet met twice to discuss the situation, once in the morning and again at seven in the evening. At the evening meeting Lloyd George suggested that a small cabinet committee be appointed to make further recommendations, a suggestion to which Lansdowne and Curzon acceded readily enough. Long remained recalcitrant, but, isolated in cabinet, he eventually agreed on the understanding that some protection would be offered to the Southern minority. To all intents and purposes Lloyd George's scheme was dead.[6] This cabinet meeting displayed

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[1] See, for example, Lansdowne, 'The Proposed Irish Settlement', 21 June 1916, and Long, 'The Irish Difficulty', 23 June 1916, A.C.P., AC 14/5/26 and 14/5/27 respectively.

[2] Chamberlain to Asquith, 22 June 1916, A.P., MS. Asquith 37/60-3.

[3] Lord Hugh Cecil to Bonar Law, 26 June 1916, B.L.P., 53/3/7.

[4] Midleton to Bonar Law, 26 June 1916, ibid., 53/3/6.

[5] Christopher Addison, Politics from Within, 2 Vols. (London, 1924), 1, 257.

[6] Asquith's Report to the King, 27 June 1916, P.R.O., CAB 37/150/23; J.A. Spender and Cyril Asquith, Life of Lord Oxford and Asquith, 2 Vols. (London, 1932), 2, 219-20; Jenkins, Asquith, pp. 400-1.

to the full the deep divisions in the Unionist leadership. Balfour delivered a characteristically elaborate refutation of all the arguments advanced by the opponents; Bonar Law insisted that to reject the scheme was pure folly when peaceable settlement was at last in sight; Long and Lansdowne used the official police and Army reports, all of which indicated that public opinion in Ireland was turning increasingly against the government, to emphasise the absurdity of offering concessions as the reward for rebellion.[1]

The cabinet committee could delay but not resolve the crisis, and neither Long nor Lansdowne yet withdrew their resignation threats. Long was adamant that the scheme was 'the worst of any that has ever been proposed' and he confessed that he was 'utterly puzzled by the line adopted by B.L., A.J.B., and Carson.'[2] He still intended to resign and it was only after Professor Hewins spent two hours with him on the afternoon of 1 July that he agreed to stay on for the present. On his way to this meeting with Long, Hewins had bumped into Bonar Law. When Hewins had remarked that to continue with the settlement would break the party Bonar Law had replied that perhaps it would be a good thing for the Conservative party to split into its two natural factions.[3]

On 5 July the cabinet committee reported. Although in

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[1]Asquith's Report to the King, 27 June 1916, loc. cit.

[2]Long to Sir James Campbell, copy, 29 June 1916, W.L.P., WRO 947/173.

[3]Hewins, Apologia of an Imperialist, 2, 81-2.

favour of an immediate grant of home rule - this was to be expected as Asquith and Lloyd George were both amongst its members - it recommended that the proposed bill be amended to ensure protection for Britain's military and naval bases in Ireland. Whilst reaffirming his opposition to Lloyd George's proposals, Lansdowne told his colleagues that he had decided not to resign in view of the war situation. Long reluctantly agreed, complaining that his dilemma was a 'cruel one' and remarking rather pointedly that if he chose to resign he would carry the majority of the Conservative party, so smashing the coalition. He was staying only from a sense of duty and an unwillingness to plunge the country into political turmoil. Lloyd George won his box of cigars, and that night Asquith cheerfully, but prematurely, informed the King that the crisis was over.[1] Lord Selborne was to be the only casualty.[2]

With Long and Lansdowne responding to the call of loyalty and duty, Bonar Law now mistakenly believed that he could force a settlement on his own backbenchers. A meeting of Conservative MPs was called for 7 July at the Carlton Club, and Bonar Law did his best to persuade the rank and file to accept a settlement. His authority was somewhat compromised by Lansdowne, who delivered a speech which made his hostility to the scheme plain for all to see.

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[1]Asquith's Report to the King, 5 July 1916, P.R.O., CAB 37/151/8; Jenkins, Asquith, p. 401.

[2]Selborne resigned and was succeeded as President of the Board of Agriculture by the Earl of Crawford.

The whips had worked assiduously to avoid a vote which might split the party. After Lansdowne's speech it was decided to adjourn the meeting without coming to any conclusion. Clearly, Bonar Law did not have the party behind him and had badly miscalculated its mood.[1] Shortly afterwards, Hewins recorded in his diary his impression that the party would not split and that Bonar Law would back down.[2]

What Lloyd George, Carson and Bonar Law had not fully appreciated was the ability of Long and Lansdowne to wreck the scheme from within the cabinet. Whatever their theoretical loyalty to the government they commanded the bulk of the Conservative party in both Houses. Accordingly, on 11 July they finished off the already moribund scheme for good. Long despatched a statement to Lloyd George reiterating his objections and pledging that, despite his decision to remain in the cabinet, he would fight until the proposals were officially abandoned.[3] At the same time Lansdowne made a devastating speech in the Lords. He insisted that the exclusion of Ulster must be permanent and that the remainder of Ireland would, if deemed necessary by Westminster, be governed under the terms of a strengthened Defence of the Realm Act. Republican lawlessness would not be tolerated and the government would

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[1]A transcript of this meeting is in B.L.P., 63/C/64. See also Blake, Unknown Prime Minister, pp. 286-7.

[2]Hewins, Apologia of an Imperialist, 2, 83.

[3]Copy of a statement sent by Long to Lloyd George, 11 July 1916, B.L.P., 63/C/11.

hold itself free to have recourse to trial by resident magistrates under the old Crimes Act.[1]

Long and Lansdowne had cleverly shifted their ground from opposition to any settlement at the present time to laying down the terms of a possible settlement which they knew would be anathema to the Nationalists. After Lansdowne's speech Redmond could hardly continue to pretend that partition was only provisional. The two opponents had calculated that by stating terms that were quite at odds with those of Lloyd George they would destroy the notion that any real basis for a settlement existed. At a stroke, Lansdowne exposed what should have been evident to all: there was no more a basis for settlement than there had been in 1912-14. Asquith now allowed the negotiations to drift and eventually to peter out altogether. With a divided cabinet and a Conservative rebellion in the offing, he had little choice. The scheme was quietly dropped.[2] No alternatives were explored, though Long and Lansdowne both made it clear that they

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[1] 22 H.L.Deb. ser.5 cols. 645-52.

[2] Patrick Buckland, in his Irish Unionism: One: The Anglo-Irish and the New Ireland, 1885-1922, pp. 51-82, has argued that it was the opposition of the Southern loyalists which was mainly responsible for the abandonment of Lloyd George's scheme. This account does less than justice to the role of Long and Lansdowne in the events of May, June and July 1916, nor does it give due weight to the considerations of British party politics which gave Long and Lansdowne their victory. Whatever the opposition from Southern Unionists, a united cabinet could have imposed the scheme on Ireland. Asquith and Bonar Law bowed not to pressure exerted by Lord Midleton, but to the political exigencies dictated by a divided cabinet and restive Conservative backbenchers.

were prepared to consider alternative schemes once good government had been restored at Dublin Castle.

It has been suggested that Bonar Law perceived the differences between himself, Long and Lansdowne as a means to purge the Unionist party of its old guard.[1] Certainly, Bonar Law's remark to Hewins about it being a good thing if the party was to split seems to support this view. By siding with Carson and Lloyd George, Bonar Law perhaps hoped to settle his difficulties with Long once and for all, emerging as the undisputed leader of the party - possibly a much reduced party - in fact as well as in name. But Long refused to play this game: he remained in the cabinet as much to ensure continued Conservative unity as to defeat the Irish proposals. He knew that his own resignation would signal not only the collapse of the coalition but also possible disaster for the party. 'There is no doubt', Long wrote on 12 July,

> that in our Party there is very bitter feeling ... and I am assured that the number of malcontents are daily increasing. On the other hand, I know it to be an absolute fact that if the Government were to be broken up as the result of our retirement, and it seems probable that this would be the case, there would be no chance of securing the return of a single one of us if we stood on the ground ... that we dissented from

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[1]David W. Savage, 'The Attempted Home Rule Settlement of 1916', Eire-Ireland 2 (1967), p. 144.

> the proposals to which Carson on the one hand and Redmond and Devlin on the other have agreed, and that we proposed as our only alternative ... 'a policy of coercion'.[1]

Bonar Law was, Long believed, displaying an egregious failure of leadership: he risked the erosion of his own political powerbase by attempting to force on his party a policy which the majority could not accept. Duped by Lloyd George, encouraged by Carson, sustained in erudite argument by Balfour, Bonar Law was out of touch with the party he claimed to lead. Long put it bluntly on 15 July:

> Balfour and B.Law would have much preferred to leave matters alone. Balfour does not care what happens ... in Ireland, B.Law is in Carson's pocket as regards Ireland and in Lloyd George's as regards all other affairs of Government, and has besides entirely lost his nerve.... he is in a blue funk. He moaned to me that "this means a break up of the Government ..." I asked him if he was prepared to make a stand for anything.[2]

An indication of the strength of party feeling against Bonar Law is to be found in membership of the Imperial Unionist Association, an 'ad hoc' group called together by Lord Salisbury to watch over the negotiations, articulate the criticisms of party malcontents, and generally make life difficult for Bonar Law unless he paid more

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[1]Long to Sir James Campbell, copy, 12 July 1916, W.L.P., WRO 947/173.

[2]Long to Lansdowne, copy, 15 July 1916, ibid., WRO 947/268.

heed to the party's wishes. It made no secret of its hostility to any form of home rule during the war and by mid-July could claim ninety-eight members in the Commons and seventy-six in the Lords.[1] If these figures are accurate, then approximately one third of all Conservative MPs had joined an organisation which was unreservedly committed to the destruction of Lloyd George's plan. With a third of his parliamentary followers in open revolt, Bonar Law was on the edge of a political precipice.

Meanwhile, Long and Lansdowne continued to bombard the cabinet with memoranda urging much tougher measures to deal with republican disorder and crime.[2] Long was by now threatening Asquith openly with 'the determined opposition of the Unionist party' if the government's Irish policy was 'not a firm one, maintenance of the law and suppression of sedition.'[3] Finally, on the 27th, the cabinet decided formally to abandon the settlement and H.E. Duke told Bonar Law that he would be prepared to take on the duties of the Irish Office.[4] Long was perfectly satisfied with Duke's appointment, telling Lady Londonderry on 2 August that although 'there are rumours of further negotiations ... I can hardly think anybody will care to burn his fingers so soon'.[5]

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[1] The Times, The Daily Telegraph, 18 July 1916.

[2] See Lansdowne, 'The Irish Situation', 17 July 1916; Long, 'Government of Ireland Amendment Bill', 18 July 1916; Long, 'State of Ireland', 21 July 1916, A.C.P., AC 14/5/38, 39, and 42 respectively.

[3] Long to Asquith, copy, 26 July 1916, W.L.P., WRO 947/144.

[4] See Duke to Bonar Law, 27 July 1916, B.L.P., 53/4/8. Duke was officially appointed on 3 Aug. 1916.

[5] Long to Lady Londonderry, 2 Aug. 1916, L.L.P., D/Lo/C 666(290).

It is important to realise that Long had opposed Lloyd George's scheme only because he believed the measures ill-timed and unworkable. He was no longer an adherent of 'diehard' Unionism.[1] On the contrary, he saw that the Union could not be upheld indefinitely, and that the best course was for Irish Unionists to come up with an acceptable scheme before an unacceptable one was forced upon them. Long's views are clear from a letter which he wrote to George Stewart of the Irish Unionist Alliance on 30 July:

> I honestly believe that it would be impossible in these days to secure support in Parliament for the maintenance of the Union in its present form, having regard to, first, the fact that there is a Home Rule Act on the Statute Book, and, second, that any attempt to ignore it or repeal it would be followed by violent agitation in the House of Commons and by some trouble in Ireland ... and therefore there must be some alternative policy. The constituencies in England are sick of the Home Rule question ... if we are going to protect what is best and what we care for most, we must be ready with an alternative policy.[2]

Long's attitude to home rule in 1916 has been the subject of much interpretative error. Historians have happily assumed that Long's condemnation of the Lloyd George scheme represents a further instalment of the opposition to all forms of home rule for which he was

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[1]Sir William Bull's diary confirms that Long was in favour of home rule at some later date. Bull's 'Retrospect for the Second Half of 1916' includes the following remark: 'I am firmly convinced we did the right thing - it will pave the way for a better settlement later on - Long was responsible for it.' See Bu.P., 4/14.

[2]Long to Stewart, copy, 30 July 1916, W.L.P., WRO 947/362.

notorious in the years before 1914. It has even been suggested that he opposed the settlement 'more out of pique than anything else at not having been consulted.'[1] And Asquith's biographer trod a familiar path by taking the view that the scheme represented a genuine opportunity to solve the Irish problem by negotiation, its ultimate abandonment due in large part to the stubbornness of a few Unionists who could still not concede the desirability of home rule.[2] Yet Long's opposition was based only on the sensible view that the plan could not work, both because the aftermath of an armed rebellion could not provide a political climate conducive to compromise, and because Redmond and Carson would inevitably differ, whatever they might individually have agreed with Lloyd George.

Indeed, Long did rather more than simply insist that the scheme was dropped: he put forward constructive alternative proposals - proposals which Asquith ignored. In a private memorandum to the prime minister, written sometime in June 1916, Long provided a way out which did not involve abandonment of home rule. He suggested that the government should announce that the plan had broken down owing to intractable difficulties but that all parties were willing to proceed with negotiations. An Irish Conference should then be called under the chairmanship of some distinguished lawyer whose sympathies

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[1]Hyde, Carson, p. 405.

[2]See Jenkins, Asquith, pp. 398-402.

were known to be with home rule. All parties, including Sinn Fein, would be invited to attend, and the conference would take up the matter at the point left by the break-down of Lloyd George's plan. The government should provide a working outline, to be approved in advance by the whole cabinet.

Long adumbrated these working proposals as a basis for discussion: separate parliaments to be established in Dublin and Belfast, both to be responsible to Westminster; the R.I.C. and the Dublin Metropolitan Police to be merged into one force, one third to remain under the control of the British parliament, the remainder to be divided into two forces and placed under the Irish parliaments; proportional representation to safeguard the nationalist minority in the six counties and the Unionist minority in the South; and a general council to deal with affairs common to all Ireland.[1] Of course, many of these proposals eventually saw the light of day under Lloyd George's premiership: 1917 saw the calling of an Irish Convention and Long's own Government of Ireland Bill three years later set up separate parliaments in Dublin and Belfast, as well as providing for an all Ireland Council.

This memorandum presented a perfectly feasible alternative

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[1]A copy of this memorandum, dated merely June 1916, can be found in C.P., MSS. Eur. F. 112/178. Long sent a copy to Curzon nearly a year later in the belief that his plan still represented the best means by which the government should proceed. In a covering letter, dated 12 May 1917, Long remarked that the memorandum had originally been written 'for Asquith after the Rebellion.'

to Lloyd George's plan and a method by which the government could have proceeded with a united cabinet. Instead, Asquith chose to drop home rule altogether. Abandonment of Lloyd George's plan did not necessarily mean abandonment of all Irish negotiations. In the end, it must be concluded that Asquith's attempt to settle Ireland in the summer of 1916 was half-hearted and feeble. The scheme which he tried was hastily cobbled together and based on at least some measure of duplicity. When faced with a cabinet crisis he backed down and chose to do nothing, even though Long made it clear that he had no objection to further discussions, provided only that proposals for an immediate grant of home rule were dropped. Defeated once, Asquith had no inclination to try again, preferring to let his Irish policy drift in the rather sanguine belief that victory would somehow provide the 'deus ex machina' of a negotiated settlement.

Long continued to keep an eye on the Irish situation throughout 1916, taking a keen interest in any proposals which might lead to a solution. Late in September he suggested that Professor Hewins should act as a negotiator with Redmond and Devlin in an effort to find some basis for discussion. Negotiations, he argued, should be as broadly based as possible and should include representatives not just of the conflicting Irish parties, but also of the Catholic and Protestant Churches and of Irish economic interests. To expect further initiatives from Asquith or

Duke was futile, for both 'were completely bankrupt in suggestion.'[1] Long's motives, then, in blocking Lloyd George's home rule plans were neither obscurantist nor obstructive. As usual, his attitude was based on a fundamentally realistic approach to the problem. To sum up, Long was not opposed to the idea of a settlement, at some future date, along the lines of partition. Rather, he was opposed to the particular settlement which Lloyd George had devised.[2]

The cabinet crisis over Ireland also had important implications for party politics at Westminster. Bonar Law had never enjoyed much authority as Conservative party leader. What authority he did possess was not

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[1]Hewins, Apologia of an Imperialist, 2, 88-92.

[2]The fact that Long was initially prepared to allow negotiations to continue and was at first in favour of Lloyd George's exploratory mission is not an indication, as has been argued by Patrick Buckland in Irish Unionism: One: The Anglo-Irish and the New Ireland, p. 73, that Long was a late convert to the Southern Unionists' point of view, but it is an indication that he was in a potentially conciliatory mood over Irish policy in 1916. It was only when Lloyd George went beyond the cabinet's intentions that Long took a hostile line. Contrary to Dr Buckland's argument, there was no sudden caprice, engendered by Southern Unionist pressure, involved in Long's opposition from 30 May onwards to Lloyd George's proposals. If Lloyd George had stuck to the cabinet's instructions to investigate whether there might be any basis for a settlement and then report back, Long would probably have ignored the objections of the Southern loyalists. He was consistently in favour of negotiations and his letter of 30 July to George Stewart suggests that he had little time for Southern Unionist intransigence.

enhanced by the way in which Asquith had relegated him to the position of junior partner in the coalition. He had held only one cabinet appointment - and that had been given by a Liberal prime minister - whereas Long had held four, Lansdowne three. A Tory credo of the time contained the lines:

> I believe in Henry Asquith, Vicar of Bray, Wait and See; And in Andrew Bonar Law, his ardent colleague and dupe; Who was conceived in Imperialism; born of Unionist expediency; led the opposition of Herbert Henry; was circumvented, fooled and diddled. He descended into the Coalition, and on the first day he rose to Cabinet rank according to the Agreement. He ascended into favour with all Radicals, and sitteth at the right hand of the Vicar: from whence he will descend again when Henry has no further use for him.[1]

Long's victory both exposed and reinforced this weakness, emphasising that it was Long, and not Bonar Law, who had the strongest claim to be regarded as the 'de facto' leader of the Conservative party, especially where Irish affairs were concerned. Lloyd George never again underestimated Long's influence, and his own government's Irish policy between 1917 and 1921 was carefully tailored to meet with Long's approbation. Lloyd George also realised that Long's support was essential if Conservative adherence to coalition was to be guaranteed. This was an important consideration in the formation of his own

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[1]Quoted Stubbs, 'Conservative Party and the Politics of War', p. 393. The author is unidentified.

government in December.

The Irish negotiations of 1916 saw the alliance of Lloyd George, Bonar Law and Carson working together for the first time, albeit on this occasion on the same side as Asquith. The danger for Bonar Law was that he would be left the leader of a small Tory rump, tied to Asquith and destined, no doubt, for eventual absorption by the Liberals in much the same way as Joseph Chamberlain's followers had been absorbed by the Unionists after 1886. Lansdowne in the Lords, Long in the Commons, represented a plausible alternative leadership - a leadership, moreover, which Bonar Law knew would be more experienced, more respected and more popular than his own. He fully recognised the weakness of his own position and perceived that if he tried to make acceptance of the Lloyd George home rule scheme a test of the party's faith in his leadership he would lose.[1] Wisely, he chose defeat.

Thus, Long's victory highlighted the precariousness of Asquith's position as prime minister and Bonar Law's as Conservative leader. It stultified the pretence that Asquith could expect either loyalty from his Unionist colleagues or meek acquiescence from the backbenches. And finally, it suggested that the price which Bonar Law might be required to pay for the retention of the party leadership would be the desertion of Asquith. The Conservative party as a whole awaited only the emergence

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[1]Blake, Unknown Prime Minister, pp. 286-8.

of a credible alternative prime minister; the victory of Long and Lansdowne was the precursor of Asquith's downfall just a few months later.

CHAPTER SIX

IN LLOYD GEORGE'S GOVERNMENT, DECEMBER 1916 - FEBRUARY 1921

The dust of historical consensus has refused to settle on the political events of December 1916. Lord Beaverbrook's well known account,[1] written with a good deal of inside knowledge, continues to hold sway over the endeavours of subsequent historians. Beaverbrook's narrative has become a kind of 'authorised version', the source material for countless historical recitals. His prose style continues to delight, his political vignettes to amuse and inform.

Yet there is one aspect of this realignment of political forces which has received scant attention. As Bonar Law's chief confidant and adviser, Beaverbrook seriously undervalued Long's role and influence. How was Lloyd George able to secure Long's allegiance, and why was Law able to carry the Conservative backbenches when just a few months earlier his leadership had been exposed as somewhat nominal?

It has been seen that Long felt no particular loyalty either for Asquith or for Lloyd George. He regarded them as his colleagues only in so far as the war demanded. As he had remarked to Lady Londonderry over a year earlier: 'I would follow the Devil himself in doing what we can to

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[1] Lord Beaverbrook, Politicians and the War, 2 Vols. (London, 1928-32).

destroy the enemy.'[1] A few days after the famous Nigeria debate, when sixty-five Conservatives had voted against Bonar Law, Long wrote a revealing letter to Lord Derby. It is dated 14 November 1916:

> I entirely share your view: of course the B.Law - Carson incident was only the culminating blow. Things are very bad....
>
> Personally I think things are as bad as they can be & I really don't believe the Gov. can usefully and creditably go on much longer. Is there any alternative? If so for Heaven's sake let them show their hand, I'll support any Gov. that will drive the war to an end.[2]

And on 18 November Long wrote:

> I have heard no news, except ... that Sir E. Carson intends to do all in his power to secure ... a sufficient number of Unionists to force Bonar Law to resign and so smash the Gov. and that Lloyd George approves.... It seems to me ... that if Lloyd George is not satisfied with ... things he should resign and bring the Gov. down in an open fight and then form his own.[3]

In other words, Long was not predisposed to keep Asquith in office. Nor did he regard Lloyd George's premiership as out of the question, though he still implicitly mistrusted Lloyd George's methods.

The political tension which resulted in Asquith's downfall

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[1]Long to Lady Londonderry, 9 Nov. 1915, L.L.P., D/Lo/C 666(279).

[2]Long to Derby, 14 Nov. 1916, Lord Derby Papers (Liverpool City Library), 920 DER (17) 33.

[3]Long to Lady Londonderry, 18 Nov. 1916, L.L.P., D/Lo/C 666(291).

was exacerbated not just by the bleak military outlook following the appalling casualties of the Somme offensive,[1] but by a number of other factors. In November 1916 Lord Lansdowne urged a negotiated peace on the cabinet, much to the disgust of his Conservative colleagues. Lansdowne thus suggested implicitly that Asquith's government could not win the war. Such a proposal naturally rocked the political boat. There was further tension over food shortages. Lord Crawford, who in July had replaced Lord Selborne as President of the Board of Agriculture, the latter having resigned over Lloyd George's home rule proposals, raised the matter of food supplies on a number of occasions in cabinet. He found Asquith lacking in any sense of urgency and most other ministers lackadaisical. Long, for example, believed that the populace could well survive on a much reduced diet. The government decided to appoint a Controller of Food but had considerable difficulty finding the right man. By the end of November an appointment had still to be made, Speaker Lowther and four others having been offered the post only to decline it.[2]

A financial crisis also threatened to overtake the

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[1]Although the attack on the Somme, which begun on 1 July 1916, was a failure from the beginning it continued until November, when it finally ground to a halt in the Flanders mud with no strategical gain having been made. As A.J.P. Taylor has commented: 'Not only men perished. There perished also the zest and idealism with which nearly three million Englishmen had marched forth to war.' A.J.P. Taylor, English History 1914-1945 (Oxford, 1965), p. 61.

[2]Crawford's diary, 29 Nov. 1916, The Crawford Papers, p. 369.

government. A meeting of past and present Chancellors of the Exchequer - McKenna, Lloyd George, Asquith and Austen Chamberlain - discussed the exchange problem on 29 November, contemplating a crisis 'so serious that it might involve abandonment of the gold standard ...'[1] It is against this background that the events of the first week of December must be set.

Long first learnt of Bonar Law's negotiations with Carson and Lloyd George, designed to secure the appointment of a war council with plenary powers, at a meeting of Conservative members of the cabinet held on 30 November. He reacted by demanding that no steps be taken without full consultation, though he agreed that 'the Govt. cannot "carry on" as it is' and that 'real reconstruction is absolutely necessary'.[2] Long raised no objection to the scheme in principle and in a letter to Bonar Law dated 2 December he accepted that there must be a change both in the composition of the government and in the running of the war. His main concern was to forestall any independent action on Bonar Law's part; he did not want the Conservative party dragged into coalition as the servant of Lloyd George in a repeat performance of May 1915, with Lloyd George merely replacing Asquith at the

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Long to Bonar Law, 2 Dec. 1916, B.L.P., 53/4/28. Beaverbrook quoted this letter in full in Politicians and the War, 2, 166-7, but misdated it as having been written on 2 Oct. 1916. A day earlier Long reported to Lansdowne that feeling in the Commons was running strongly against Asquith and that a change would have to be made. See Long to Lansdowne, 1 Dec. 1916, Lord Lansdowne Papers.

top. But Long was certainly not contemplating lending any support to Asquith. He confided his thoughts to Sir William Bull on the afternoon of Saturday 2 December:

> I believe that situation is impossible & cannot go on: at same time I dread the change as I don't like the man [i.e. Lloyd George]. It is a terrible situation. The PM declines to budge ... I find it impossible to support him.[1]

This letter was written at 4.30 p.m., immediately after Long had had a talk with Bonar Law, who had agreed to meet the Conservative members of the cabinet at his house on the following morning. It is clear that Long was not prepared to back Asquith from the start and was, moreover, fully cognizant of the fact that Lloyd George was the only real alternative.

On Sunday 3 December Long attended the meeting of Conservative ministers at Bonar Law's house and lent his name to the resolution calling on Asquith to resign. Bonar Law had called this Sunday morning meeting in order to inform his colleagues of his own intention to resign, but he can hardly have expected his guests to push him into making a collective resignation of all the Unionist ministers. Beaverbrook grouped Long together with the 'three Cs' - Curzon, Chamberlain and Cecil - in urging Asquith to resign as a calculated manoeuvre to expose Lloyd George's inability to form a government, thus

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[1]Long to Bull, 2 Dec. 1916, Bu.P. 4/14.

allowing Asquith to return in a far stronger position.[1] Yet Long had already made it clear that he favoured change. That Long had no intention of bolstering Asquith's position is evident from Sir William Bull's private diary. Bull met Long at Paddington[2] and they walked together to Bonar Law's house, Pembroke Lodge, for the meeting at eleven o'clock. Bull recorded the conversation:

> I advised Walter that they should write an ultimatum to the PM. I advised him not to speak until the others had & sit tight - or else it would be said he had broken the government.[3]

It is, therefore, more than likely that the famous 'ultimatum' to Asquith was written at Long's instigation, and written with the express intention of bringing the government down. There is nothing in Bull's account of the day's events, or in Long's correspondence over the preceding twenty-four hours, to suggest that Long intended to strengthen the prime minister's hand against Lloyd George - an interpretation which originates with Lord Beaverbrook.

According to Bull, it was further agreed at the morning meeting that the Unionist ministers 'should all separate so that they could not be talked round into having another

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[1]Beaverbrook, Politicians and the War, 2, 208-34.

[2]Long had spent the night at Iver Heath with Grant Morden, a wealthy Canadian Army officer with political aspirations. Morden entered parliament in December 1918, having attached himself to Long in order to further his political career. In 1917 he helped Long out of financial difficulties; Bull disliked him intensely. See Bull's diary, 'Second Summary for 1917', Bu.P., 4/16.

[3]Bull's diary, 3 Dec. 1916, ibid., 4/14.

meeting - the old man will creep & beg you to reconsider the position.'[1] Bull also asserts that Asquith asked the Conservative leaders to meet again on Sunday afternoon whilst he struggled to reach an accommodation with Lloyd George. Two meetings did take place, one at 3 p.m. and one at 7 p.m. Bull does not say who attended or what transpired, merely that 'Walter could not be found & only 2 or 3 met on each occasion.'[2] Bull appears to have been slightly misinformed about these later meetings but further light is shed on the proceedings by Lord Crawford's account. A second Unionist conference took place at Pembroke Lodge after lunch. Bonar Law, Austen Chamberlain, Lord Robert Cecil, F.E. Smith, Crawford and H.E. Duke were present; Curzon and Long were absent.[3] Just before 6 p.m. Bonar Law was summoned to Downing Street, and the remainder of the party then moved to F.E. Smith's house in order to be closer to the centre of events. Bonar Law returned an hour later[4] and told his colleagues that Asquith and Lloyd George had reached agreement. He also explained his failure to hand in the joint letter of resignation by reporting that Asquith had begged him not to do so.[5]

There is no hint in Crawford's diary that the Unionist

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Memorandum on Sunday 3 Dec. 1916, The Crawford Papers, p. 371. Crawford says that the afternoon meeting took place at Bonar Law's house; Bull says that it occurred at F.E. Smith's. As Crawford attended the meeting, and Bull did not, it is more than likely that Crawford's statement is correct, Bull's incorrect.

[4] Both Crawford's and Bull's accounts agree that this evening meeting occurred at 7 p.m.

[5] Memorandum on Sunday 3 Dec. 1916, loc. cit.

resignation was intended to strengthen Asquith's hand. On the contrary, Crawford thought that Lloyd George's greatest difficulty lay with the minority parties - Labour and Irish Nationalists - and that the Conservatives were prepared even as early as Sunday to back him. Crawford noted that Lloyd George

> ... will probably find that though he can easily form a government it will be difficult to get the assent of Labour and the Nationalists. It is also said that our men have only backed him because they distrust Asquith still more.... My impression is that he has a big support among our friends in the provinces, in the army too, and that his energy would enable him to carry out policy which the present government as constituted would fail in, even if they were united.[1]

At no time did Long indicate to the prime minister that his objective was to destroy Lloyd George's bid for power.

There is some evidence to suggest that Curzon and some other Unionist ministers saw Asquith later on the Sunday evening,[2] but there is nothing to suggest that Long was one of this party. Asquith's oft-quoted remark to Pamela McKenna that evening - 'The crisis shows every sign of following its many predecessors to an early and unhonoured grave'[3] - indicates that by the time he retired on Sunday

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[1] Ibid., p. 372.

[2] For a summary of the evidence to support the view that a meeting occurred on Sunday evening between Asquith and the 'three Cs' see J.M. McEwen, 'The Struggle for Mastery in Britain: Lloyd Geroge versus Asquith, December 1916', Journal of British Studies 18 (1978), p. 149.

[3] Asquith to Pamela McKenna, 3 Dec. 1916, quoted Jenkins, Asquith, p. 443.

the prime minister certainly did not see himself as having been reduced to the position of nominal leader of the government. The tone of this remark suggests that Asquith was confident of getting the better of Lloyd George - a confidence possibly inspired by the visit of Curzon and his friends. Yet, it must be stressed, there is nothing to indicate that Long acted with the 'three Cs'. Beaverbrook simply lumped them all together as the Conservatives who most counted if Lloyd George was to form a government, taking no account of the way in which Long's readiness to accept change, and his clear hostility to Asquith as leader of a nation at war, differed from the attitudes of Curzon, Cecil and Chamberlain. Nor did Beaverbrook pay much attention to the fact that Long's support was crucial if Lloyd George was to carry the Unionists in the Commons. Long should be counted amongst the many Conservatives who believed that Asquith lacked the determination and drive to finish the war, and his potential opposition to Bonar Law was motivated almost entirely by the suspicion that the Conservative leader would be gulled into accepting bad terms for his party. As for Beaverbrook's assertion that 'Curzon and his Conservative group in the Cabinet looked on Asquith, not Bonar Law, as their real leader',[1] this is very far-fetched. Long had certainly never regarded Asquith as his 'real leader'.

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[1]Beaverbrook, Politicians and the War, 2, 294.

The 'three Cs', together with Crawford, Lansdowne and Long, met at the India Office at lunchtime on Monday 4 December to discuss the situation. All agreed that the decision to resign was wise. In Crawford's words, there were 'no regrets or arrière-pensées'.[1] Long expressed annoyance that Bonar Law had not properly communicated the Unionist letter of resignation to Asquith. In Beaverbrook's version the 'three Cs' saw Asquith on Monday morning to express their support and to emphasise their determination not to serve under Lloyd George. If this is true, it is curious that they remained silent at the lunchtime meeting.[2] There are two possible explanations: either the 'three Cs' deliberately misled their colleagues as to their true intentions, and so kept quiet, or they did not intend to back Asquith at all, an explanation of the Unionists' joint letter of resignation which is quite at odds with Lord Beaverbrook's account. Possibly, the whole Beaverbrook thesis of the 'three Cs' tendering their resignations as a stratagem to expose Lloyd George's weakness is incorrect.

On the morning of Tuesday 5 December the Unionist ministers met to discuss Bonar Law's position. They were not pleased. The 'three Cs' decided to see Asquith. Long meanwhile went to Bonar Law with a request that he explain his behaviour at another meeting set for four o'clock that

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[1] Memorandum of 4 Dec. 1916, The Crawford Papers, p. 372.
[2] See The Crawford Papers, p. 372, n. 24.

afternoon. According to Beaverbrook, Bonar Law regarded Long's mission as outrageous and the episode was given the rather colourful title of the "Court-Martial".[1] Apart from anything else, Long and the 'three Cs' had every right to ask for an account of the tortuous negotiations which they knew to be proceeding behind their backs. In Beaverbrook's account, Bonar Law reacted with uncharacteristic bad temper to Long's request, but he did agree to meet his colleagues at five o'clock at the Colonial Office. At this meeting Bonar Law promised that the resignation of the whole government would be persisted in.

There is, however, a letter written by Austen Chamberlain which suggests that Long had decided definitely on this Tuesday to back Lloyd George. According to Chamberlain, it 'was then clear that Bonar Law was deeply committed to Lloyd George (he had taken Long into his confidence and won him over).'[2] This, at any rate, was Chamberlain's view many years later - a view which has at least a cetain verisimilitude, for it is perfectly possible that whilst the 'three Cs' reassured Asquith, Bonar Law persuaded Long to come in with Lloyd George. But Lord Crawford's diary entry for 5 December contains a lengthy account of the Colonial Office meeting, an account which casts further doubt on Beaverbrook's contention that the

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[1] Beaverbrook, Politicians and the War, 2, 272-80.

[2] Chamberlain to J.A. Spender (Asquith's biographer), 23 June 1931, A.C.P., AC 15/3/26. It must be noted that Chamberlain wrote this letter nearly fifteen years after the events to which it alludes.

'three Cs' still intended to support Asquith. All the Unionist members of the cabinet except Balfour attended, and Chamberlain, Cecil and Curzon reported their visit to Asquith earlier in the day. If the purpose of their visit to the prime minister was, as Beaverbrook alleges, to back Asquith and not Lloyd George, then they succeeded in totally misleading their Conservative colleagues.[1] The meeting decided to send a written memorandum to Asquith indicating that the Unionists' resignation must stand, as reconstruction was quite out of the question. Shortly before 6 p.m. Curzon left for Downing Street with this message.[2] According to Crawford, only Austen Chamberlain was reluctant to join Lloyd George's camp. Curzon and Cecil were 'rather anxious to do so as a public duty if required.'[3] Referring back to the events of Sunday, Lord Crawford recorded: '48 hours have elapsed and our view is stronger than ever.'[4] That same day, 5 December, Lloyd George threw in his hand by resigning. Asquith called his bluff and followed suit. The question now was, could Lloyd George form a government?

On the following day, Wednesday 6 December, a group of Conservative MPs gathered in Long's room to discuss the situation. According to Professor Hewins, who recorded details of the meeting in his diary a few days later, Long announced that he intended to support Lloyd George, a

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[1]Crawford's diary, 5 Dec. 1916, The Crawford Papers, pp. 373-4.

[2]Ibid., p. 375.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid.

decision which was approved by the party backbenchers. As Hewins commented, Long's following in the Commons made his inclusion essential to Lloyd George whereas 'Austen and Robert Cecil are of no importance.'[1] That Long had decided to join, provisionally at least, is confirmed by a letter which he wrote that day to his old friend Lady Londonderry:

> There are so many different elements to be considered and placated that we can't ... afford to lose a single man. I don't care who leads, or who composes the Gov. so long as a stable Gov. is set up and this war work carried on with vigour.[2]

Contrary to Beaverbrook's account, then, Long was by Wednesday ready to serve under Lloyd George, and if Lord Crawford's assessment of the mood of his cabinet colleagues was correct, then there was little inclination amongst any of the Unionist ministers to back Asquith, with only Austen Chamberlain dead set against Lloyd George's premiership.

Thursday 7 December was the critical day for Lloyd George, and it is here that Lord Beaverbrook's account leaves most to be desired. The Beaverbrook version of events, followed closely by subsequent historians, should be borne in mind: Lloyd George made a separate overture to Long to entice him to join the new government. This was repulsed, and

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[1]Hewins, Apolgia of an Imperialist, 2, 96-8.

[2]Long to Lady Londonderry, 6 Dec. 1916, L.L.P., D/Lo/C 666(292).

Long stated that he would act only in concert with the other dissident Conservative ex-ministers, the 'three Cs'. Lloyd George and Bonar Law then managed together to detach Curzon by an offer of a place in the new war cabinet, following which Lloyd George saw Long and the 'three Cs' again in the evening, this time arriving at an agreement by which they would all enter the government. Thus, in the Beaverbrook version it is Curzon who makes the decision which ensures that Lloyd George will have enough Unionist support to form a government.[1] In fact, it was Long.

On Thursday morning, Lord Edmund Talbot, the Unionist chief whip, told Lloyd George that he could not guarantee to rally the hostile Tory backbenchers 'who might if they held out make things very awkward in the House';[2] and Christopher Addison's assurances concerning the degree of support which Lloyd George could expect from Liberal MPs were decidedly over-optimistic.[3] Correspondence between Long and Chamberlain in December 1923, after Bonar Law's death, shows that Beaverbrook did not know what had transpired on Thursday afternoon.[4] Lloyd George sent for

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[1] Beaverbrook, Politicians and the War, 2, 313-27.

[2] Frances Stevenson's diary, 7 Dec. 1916, A Diary by Frances Stevenson, p. 134.

[3] See J.M. McEwen, 'Lloyd George's Liberal supporters in December 1916: a note', Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research 53 (1980). The strength of the parties in the House was as follows: 288 Unionists, 260 Liberals, 82 Irish Nationalists and 40 Labour.

[4] See Long to Chamberlain, 7 Dec. 1923, A.C.P., AC 15/3/20. Long's copy is dated 3 Dec. 1923, perhaps indicating that he hesitated for some days before posting the letter, and may be found in L.P., Add. MS. 62405. Further correspondence between Long and Chamberlain concerning what happened in December 1916 may be found in W.L.P., WRO 947/826. Long did not divulge what had happened until the general election

Long and a secret meeting took place - Bonar Law was also in attendance. Long was told that the section of the Conservative party which would follow him was much larger than that which supported either Chamberlain or Carson and that it was essential to a stable government that he agree to take office. Lloyd George told Long that with the exception of the Foreign Office and the Admiralty - already reserved for Balfour and Carson respectively - he could choose his own office, and, in order to give full weight to his appointment, he must choose a Secretaryship of State. Bull's account, confided to his diary on the following day, confirms what took place, differing from Long's version only in that it states that Long was told he could not choose the War Office. It is worth quoting at length:

> Lloyd George and Bonar Law after keeping Walter out of it for 24 hours asked if they might come and see him ... If I had been Walter I would have let them come round to him now that they were realising they could not form

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campaign of December 1923 and his letter was provoked by an attack which Lloyd George had made about the role of the Conservative party during the war. Long cited the events of the afternoon of 7 December 1916 as an example of Lloyd Geroge's duplicity. Chamberlain was not particularly surprised that Bonar Law should in 1916 have tried to drive a wedge between himself and Long. He told Long: 'As far as the attitude of Lloyd George and Bonar to me at that moment is concerned, you must remember that George never liked me.... I also learned later from Bonar himself that at the moment of which you speak (1916) Bonar thought I was intriguing against him and trying to deprive him of the leadership.... I only tell you ... now to show that I understand why Bonar separated you from me in his mind at the 1916 crisis and that therefore what you tell me will not alter my feeling for Bonar and does not pain or puzzle me.' Chamberlain to Long, copy, 11 Dec. 1923, A.C.P., AC 15/3/21.

a Government without him - but that was not Walter's way - He wrote a curt letter back saying as he was a junior Minister he would wait on them.

They then offered him any of the Secretaries of State except the War Office which L.G. said he meant to retain for himself.

Walter said I will consider it if you let me ask the advice of two men:-

No it is a secret & you must decide here and now

Very well then I decline:-

They then temporized - I do not know if Long gave any names but he meant his son Toby - a Brigadier General of 3 weeks standing and myself (Toby was just back from the front).

He came back and Toby and I saw him in his room - After a long palava we advised him to accept the Colonies....

Walter went back & they agreed to his terms at once - Austen was not to be told that Long had been sent for first.

On looking back I suppose Lloyd George only pretended to take the W.O. to prevent Walter asking for it - not knowing that he would never do such a thing.[1]

Years later Lloyd George claimed that it was Long who was ultimately responsible for keeping Carson out of the war cabinet, insisting instead that Carson be 'fitted to a post for which he was unsuited';[2] but this does not square with Long's later account that Lloyd George had already decided that Carson should go to the Admiralty by the time that he saw Long on Thursday afternoon. Long duly claimed the Colonial Office for himself, a post which he

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[1]Bull's diary, 8 Dec. 1916, Bu.P., 4/14.

[2]Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 3, 1176; Hyde, Carson, p. 414.

had wanted for many years.[1] Later that same day he wrote privately to both Lloyd George and Bonar Law to deprecate government by such a small war cabinet, and when he learnt that Curzon had been offered a place he clearly regretted that he had not driven a harder bargain.[2] That evening Long wrote cryptically to Lord Lansdowne: 'I hope you will let me come and tell you my experiences of today, they have been by no means pleasant. I hope I have done the right thing ...'[3] To Lady Londonderry Long explained: 'I have accepted the Secretaryship of State for Colonies, under much pressure. I wished to be let off and to support Gov. as a backbencher but Ll.G. would not agree.'[4]

In order to secure Chamberlain's co-operation, Lloyd George wanted to announce Long's consent to join as a 'fait accompli'. Chamberlain would receive no prior word, but would simply hear, along with everybody else, that Long was the new Colonial Secretary.[5] By this strategy

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[1] On 13 June 1909 Bull had recorded: 'Long would be the first to say he would make a rotten Chancellor - He would like the Colonies or the Admiralty for choice.' Bull's diary, Bu.P., 3/19. Long fulfilled both of these ambitions under Lloyd George's premiership,

[2] See Long to Bonar Law, 7 Dec. 1916, and Long to Lloyd George, copy, 7 Dec. 1916, B.L.P., 81/1/9. Lloyd George recorded in his War Memoirs, 4, 1732, that 'Mr. Walter Long was rather piqued at his exclusion from the War Cabinet. He was always conscious of the fact that he was regarded by a large section of the Conservative party as the most eligible successor to the leadership vacated by Balfour.'

[3] Long to Lansdowne, 7 Dec. 1916, Lord Lansdowne Papers.

[4] Long to Lady Londonderry, 8 Dec. 1916, L.L.P., D/Lo/C 666(293).

[5] Long to Chamberlain, 7 Dec. 1923, loc. cit.

Lloyd George and Bonar Law tried to divide the potential opposition to the new government, perhaps hoping to exploit the latent enmity between Long and Chamberlain. But Long refused to agree to this plan. Later that day another private interview took place at the Colonial Office between Long and Bonar Law. Long was again pressed to allow Lloyd George to announce his decision to join. This second interview occurred immediately before Bonar Law was due to see Chamberlain and Lord Robert Cecil. Again, Long refused to sanction the announcement or to allow Lloyd George to use the information to coerce Chamberlain and Cecil into joining. Realising that the intended trickery would cause bad feeling if it became generally known, Bonar Law swore Long to secrecy with the words, 'I hope you won't mention what has happened to Austen or to any of our colleagues.'[1] Long kept quiet for seven years.

It is quite clearly a mistake to regard Long as working in league with the 'three Cs'. Significantly, Frances Stevenson's diary does not mention Long as among 'the hostile section of the Unionist party'. Cecil, Curzon and Chamberlain, however, are all mentioned by name.[2] If Lloyd George had been unable to secure the co-operation of all the Tory ex-ministers at the evening meeting on 7 December, he would still have been able to form a government, for Chamberlain and Cecil were already effectively isolated,

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Frances Stevenson's diary, 6 Dec, 1916, A Diary by Frances Stevenson, p. 133.

though they were not, of course, aware of it. As it was, the evening agreement, to which Long, Curzon, Chamberlain and Cecil all lent their names, smoothed things over and gave a false impression of unanimity. Long's undertaking to join as Colonial Secretary regardless of the 'three Cs' remained a secret known only to himself, Sir William Bull, Lloyd George and Bonar Law, until he decided many years later to tell Chamberlain the full story. And he told Chamberlain only when he had retired from active politics, when the party had turned against Lloyd George, and after Bonar Law had died.

This version of events is confirmed by a further piece of evidence. According to Christopher Addison, Lloyd George also saw Herbert Samuel on Thursday afternoon. Samuel refused to join the administration on the grounds that it would be politically unstable. He was considerably taken aback when Lloyd George retorted that Balfour and Long had already consented to join.[1]

Beaverbrook, then, could hardly have been more in error than when he remarked that Lloyd George had had 'to go to Tories like Walter Long to be repulsed.'[2] The extent to which Beaverbrook was misinformed can be gleaned from a letter which he wrote to Lord Crewe when writing his book some years later:

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[1] Addison, Four and a Half Years, 1, 277.

[2] Beaverbrook, Politicians and the War, 2, 341.

I am not going to publish the full facts in my book, but I put them in writing for your benefit.... Lloyd George saw Long separately and made him an offer. Long declined on the ground that he must stand by his friends.... Bonar Law then sent Edmund Talbot to Curzon with an offer of a place in the War Cabinet. That settled it.... Long comes out of the business very well. He was a stupid man, and he would not realise that Curzon had swallowed the bait he had refused.[1]

In other words, Beaverbrook knew that Long had been seen separately, but he did not know that Long had agreed to take office. Long was not as stupid as Beaverbrook made out: he had accepted office before Curzon, but had avoided any stigma of treachery by managing to keep the affair secret. In response to a request from Beaverbrook for his version of events, Long simply wrote in November 1919: 'I have omitted a great deal that happened at the time, as I believe I promised not to mention certain very interesting incidents.'[2]

In fact, Long seems to have taken quite deliberate steps to conceal the role which he played in the crisis. To begin with, there is a conspicuous lacuna in his papers for December 1916. Apart from a copy of the letter which he wrote to Chamberlain in December 1923, and some ensuing correspondence, there is nothing relating to the events. His son, Eric, believed that all relevant letters had been deliberately destroyed. Austen Chamberlain,

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[1]Beaverbrook to Crewe, n.d., L.G.P., G/3/6/20.

[2]Long to Beaverbrook, 15 Nov. 1919, quoted McEwen, 'Struggle for Mastery in Britain', p. 131.

anxious to find out more about Long's behaviour, told Lord Robert Cecil on 10 July 1931 that

> Eric Long tells me that he has volumes of his father's letters, but nothing connected with the crisis of 1916. At that point there is a gap and he says it is evident that at some later date his father destroyed all letters relating to it.[1]

Presumably, Long's correspondence with Chamberlain in 1923, without which many of the details of his fateful meeting on the afternoon of 7 December 1916 would remain hidden, has survived only because it was written a full seven years after the events to which it relates. And Sir William Bull's diary, the only piece of contemporary evidence regarding Long's role, has hitherto been unavailable to historians, remaining until very recently in the custody of his son. Lord Crawford's diary, too, - essential evidence for the reconstruction of the events of the early part of this fateful week in British politics - has only very recently become available.

In his account, Beaverbrook asserted repeatedly that Long and the 'three Cs' were acting against the opinion of the bulk of the party. Bonar Law, he argued, always had the option of appealing for support to the party at large. This is not so. The party did not know what was going on; it was suspicious and mistrustful, and Long maintained his command over the backbenches throughout the crisis. It was always Long, not Bonar Law, who was

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[1]Chamberlain to Cecil, 10 July 1931, A.C.P., AC 15/3/39.

in the position of being able to appeal to the party. Lloyd George and Bonar Law had learnt the lesson taught by the collapse of the Irish negotiations earlier in the year: Long had to be conciliated or he could bring down a government which depended for its parliamentary majority on Conservative votes.

To conclude, Long's revelations to Chamberlain about his own role would appear to be accurate, Beaverbrook's account substantially inaccurate. Long was the pivot on which Unionist support for the new government was balanced.[1] Certainly, if the 'three Cs' acted throughout the crisis with the intention of backing Asquith they did so alone, without Long's support. More probably, the 'three Cs' were not as anxious to keep Lloyd George from the premiership, let alone to strengthen Asquith's hand against his detractors, as Beaverbrook made out. That Lloyd George should have recognised Long's pivotal position is not at all surprising. Indeed, Long maintained in later years that Lloyd George had approached him well before Asquith's fall in the hope that he would join Bonar Law and

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[1] Dr John Stubbs, in 'The Conservative Party and the Politics of War', p. 390, seems to be the only historian who has hitherto suspected the significance of Long's letter to Chamberlain of 7 Dec. 1923, though he was not able to confirm his suspicions by consulting Bull's diary. Nonethless, Dr Stubbs remarks perceptively that 'there remains a very distinct possibility that it was Long not Curzon who did provide the leverage that Lloyd George and Bonar Law needed to ease the Unionists into the new Coalition government.' It is, however, rather more than a 'very distinct possibility'. Long himself referred to the pivotal role which he had played in a letter to Lloyd George dated 18 July 1917. See W.L.P., WRO 947/568.

Carson and so precipitate a crisis.[1] As the man who had first broken the party truce and led the opposition of the Unionist Business Committee to Asquith's handling of the war, Long had proved that he was too dangerous to leave outside. His victory over Ireland in the summer of 1916 had shown that Bonar Law could not carry the party without Long's assent.

As always, Long's strength lay in his support on the backbenches. Even Bonar Law had been forced to admit that Long was 'the most popular man in the Tory party'. And Lloyd George desperately needed the most popular man on his side. Thus, it was Long, and not Curzon, whose support was decisive in allowing Lloyd George to inform the King, also on 7 December 1916, that he was able to form an administration. The contention that 'Law delivered the backbench Unionists'[2] overlooks the fact that he was able to do so only because he had first taken the trouble to win over Long. With Long in the Commons, then Curzon in the Lords, Lloyd George was home and dry.

Long's initial impression of Lloyd George as prime minister

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[1]For Long's accusations see the Morning Post, 4 Dec. 1923. Long's motive in disclosing this approach was to portray Lloyd George as a dishonest and self-seeking intriguer. Lloyd George denied that he had ever approached Long until after he had become prime minister. In his War Memoirs, 3, 1046, Lloyd George claimed that in forming his government he had been guided entirely by Bonar Law in the selection of Conservative ministers.

[2]Taylor, English History, p. 70.

was very favourable. He told his brother-in-law that Lloyd George 'is very determined, very clear as to what he wants, and very prompt in his actions. We have made, I think, a really good start, and I believe we have the country behind us.'[1] His own appointment to the Colonial Office was the subject of a vitriolic attack by the Northcliffe press,[2] an attack which Long felt keenly, so much so that he even told Bonar Law that he was prepared to resign if Lloyd George felt that the new government needed a friendly press.[3]

Why did Long consider resigning over a few derogatory remarks in the newspapers? Long knew that Lord Northcliffe had played a part in Lloyd George's rise to power, and he suspected that Northcliffe would not rest until he personally approved of all members of the government. The leader in The Times on 9 December dismissed Long, together with Chamberlain, Cecil, and Balfour, as a 'back number' and an 'old fossil'. Long had no wish to take office if 'all the mistakes of the new Government & there will be many, will be put down to us. We will be subject to pin-pricks all the time.'[4] On Sunday Bull went to see Geoffrey Robinson at The Times and managed to get a promise that there would be no sustained campaign, though Robinson made it clear that he personally endorsed the censure of

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[1]Long to Colonel Hugh Clutterbuck, copy, 8 Jan. 1917, W.L.P. WRO 947/541. Clutterbuck had in 1887 married Long's sister, Charlotte Anna, who had died in February 1914.

[2]See The Times, 9 Dec. 1916.

[3]See Long to Bonar Law, 9 Dec. 1916, B.L.P., 81/1/28.

[4]Bull's diary, 9 Dec. 1916, Bu.P., 4/14.

Long. On reflection, Long chose to stay in office and put up with Northcliffe's criticisms.[1]

Although the Colonial Office is generally regarded as something of a backwater in wartime, the workload was nonetheless immense. Long's administrative abilities were taxed to the full, his correspondence was vast,[2] and he was fortunate in that Professor Hewins proved a devoted and competent under-secretary. The details of Long's duties as Colonial Secretary, ranging from the inspection of Dominions troops to the supply of war materials, are of little interest. Suffice it to say that his ability and willingness to work long, irregular hours, often on tasks of immense tedium, ensured that he not only kept abreast of the work but emerged from his two years at the Colonial Office with his reputation enhanced. He also managed to find time to serve on a number of wartime committees.[3]

In addition to his ordinary tasks it fell to Long to take the chair at the Imperial War Conferences of 1917

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[1]Bull's diary, 10 Dec. 1916, ibid.

[2]Long's papers contain a considerable quantity of material relating to his two years at the Colonial Office. For his general Colonial Office correspondence see W.L.P., WRO 947/503-600. Long's correspondence with the Governors-General and Governors of the Dominions and other British dependencies may be found in ibid., WRO 947/601-34.

[3]For Long's papers relating to Manpower, 1916-17, see ibid., WRO 947/655-7; for the Enemy Interests Committee, 1916-17, see ibid., WRO 947/658; for wartime control of the production and distribution of foodstuffs, 1916-18, see ibid., WRO 947/659-63; for the Committee of the Privy Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, 1917-18, see ibid., WRO 947/664; for the Raw Materials Board, 1918, see ibid., WRO 947/669; for the War Indemnity Committee, 1918, see ibid., WRO 947/673-4.

and 1918, at the first of which a unanimous resolution was passed in favour of imperial preference.[1] Long was subsequently appointed, in August 1917, to chair a committee charged with giving practical effect to the Conference proposals.[2] He made it clear that he was concerned only to discover some workable scheme for carrying tariffs into effect, not to spend time discussing tariffs on their merits. The policy of imperial preference was taken as given. The committee met regularly for nearly a year, ploughed through masses of work, and produced several interim reports. Although Long was passionately interested in imperial unity, he was content to let other committee members do the real work and he attended few meetings, usually allowing Hewins to take charge. The prestige and authority afforded by Long's support were, however, of real value. He may not have done much of the hard grind, but he was certainly the

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[1]The Imperial War Conference of 1917 was the occasion of some animosity between Long and Lord Milner. As Colonial Secretary Long was not, of course, a member of the war cabinet. He felt that his own responsibilities as a minister were being devalued if the Dominion prime ministers sat with members of the war cabinet without the Colonial Secretary in attendance, and he therefore insisted that he should be allowed to be present at every meeting of the Imperial War Cabinet. Milner, it would appear, tried to use the Conference to foist a federal scheme on the Dominions, threatening to break up the proceedings when his efforts to stampede the premiers fell on deaf ears. Long resented these moves and had little sympathy with the Milnerites' premature intrigues, regarding a conference convened solely for the purpose of discussing the war effort as no place to undertake the massive task of Empire federation. See Gollin, Proconsul in Politics, pp. 396-98.

[2]The committee was originally known as 'The Imperial Trade Policy Committee' but after the Dominions expressed disapproval of this title it was changed, from 7 Nov. 1917, to 'The Committee on the Trade Relations of the United Kingdom within the Empire'. Long's papers relating to the committee may be found in W.L.P., WRO 947/665-8.

figurehead, seen by Fleet Street as the main architect of proposals for post-war imperial policy.

By July 1918 the committee had more or less completed its deliberations and Long obtained the approval of the war cabinet for its recommendation that post-war reconstruction should include imperial preference, subject to ratification by the Empire as a whole. On 24 July, at a luncheon held at the West India Club, Long announced that the government was now committed to imperial tariffs. Long's speech received widespread attention in the newspapers the next day, almost all of it favourable.[1] Officially at least, Lloyd George's government was now committed to tariff reform. The old controversy had largely disappeared, eroded by a general consensus, itself fostered by the experience of Empire co-operation during wartime, that tariffs represented the only way to safeguard the fruits of victory and to develop imperial resources. Later in the year, Long pressed Bonar Law,

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[1] See The Times, the Daily Telegraph, the Daily Express, the Morning Post, the Daily Mail, and the Westminster Gazette, 25 July 1918. The Manchester Guardian, predictably enough, castigated the scheme as 'ancient economic heresy' and predicted 'a peace which is like war and will generate war. For such a world the life of no man should have been taken, and it will be haunted by the ghosts of a wasted generation lured to its death by the false assurance of noble purpose.' But this heady rhetoric was now a voice in the wilderness. For the time being at least, imperial preference was the orthodoxy of all those who sought shelter behind the aegis of a British Empire so strong that its security and economic hegemony would be beyond challenge. The Times was more in accord with prevailing sentiment when it commented that the 'Preference decision is thus the beginning ... of a new order ...'

unsuccessfully, for permission to announce a more detailed policy.[1] Lloyd George paid lip service to the principles of imperial unity and tariff reform, but he would go no further and, much to the annoyance of both Long and Professor Hewins at the Colonial Office, the work of the committee was allowed to lapse.

1917 was a year of personal tragedy for Long. On 28 January his eldest son, Toby,[2] who held the rank of Brigadier-General and who commanded the 6th Battalion, the Wiltshire Regiment, was killed in action. He was thirty-seven years old and had been a professional soldier since 1899, serving in France since the beginning of the war. He died in the trenches at Hébuterne, hit in the head by a shell which killed him outright. Long had been devoted to Toby and he never fully recovered from this blow. He threw himself into his Colonial Office work in an attempt to block out the pain, but the loss of his son played its part in contributing to his own declining state of health.[3]

In February Long embarked on an ambitious scheme of Colonial Office re-organisation. His working formula was

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[1]See Long to Bonar Law, copies, 3 Oct. and 4 Oct. 1918, W.L.P., WRO 947/668.

[2]Long's eldest son was christened Walter, but he was always known as Toby.

[3]In 1921 Long had A Memoir of Brigadier-General Walter Long, C.M.G., D.S.O. published by John Murray of London for private circulation. See W.L.P., WRO 947/927-30.

that the 'proof of the efficiency of a Department is to be found in the brevity of the minutes and the rarity of the occasions on which the Secretary of State has to differ with the recommendations made to him.' He did not get very far. Realising that the war was no time to upset his staff, Long temporarily dropped his plans for a major overhaul of departmental procedures.[1]

He returned to the question in the summer of 1918. Overburdened by dreary administrative work, and finding much of his time taken up by Irish affairs, Long advocated the creation of a Secretary of State for Imperial Affairs, to be given a seat in the war cabinet. His suggestions were very far-reaching. A new Department of the Crown Colonies would be separated from the administration of the self-governing Dominions and would be given a staff of permanent officials in the usual way. The new Secretary of State would, Long submitted, communicate directly with the Dominion prime ministers, thus cutting out the Governors-General. In considering a complete reconstitution of the Colonial Office Long went on to suggest that the opportunity be used for an overhaul of the entire structure of government. He recommended a permanently small cabinet, never to exceed twelve members. The cabinet would consist only of Secretaries of State, each of whom would be in charge of two or three departments. For example, a new Imperial Secretary of State would be

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[1]Long's papers contain a draft memorandum, dated 16 Feb. 1917, intended 'to lighten the burden and expedite business.' It is annotated 'cancelled'. See W.L.P., WRO 947/509.

responsible for the Dominions but would have under him a Minister for the Colonies who would undertake the actual work previously done by the Colonial Secretary in relation to Crown colonies. Long deplored the suggestion that Lloyd George should deal directly with the Dominion prime ministers, for this would effectively have handed over control to the 'Garden Suburb' 'composed of clever young men' who 'are only after all Private Secretaries'.[1] Long was quite prepared to relinquish some of his responsibilities to a new department, but not to Lloyd George's 'clever young men'. In Long's scheme, each Secretary of State would be in charge of a number of semi-autonomous ministries, each with a minister who might attend the cabinet on special occasions as required but who would never be a member.

Long's proposition naturally gave rise to much discussion. Lloyd George expressed a predilection for dealing directly with the Dominion prime ministers through the cabinet secretariat, under the general supervision of Sir Maurice Hankey. Long regarded this plan as anathema, as it would seriously have devalued his own status as Colonial Secretary, and Lloyd George was obliged to defer in order to maintain the stability of his government. What Long wanted was a seat in the war cabinet combined with a lightening of his administrative burden, perceiving himself as the only real candidate for the new Secretaryship of State. In the end, there were no changes, and it was

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[1]Extract from a private letter from Long to Sir Ronald Munro-Ferguson, 3 July 1918, M.P., MS. Eng. Hist. c.706, fos. 5-10.

decided, in July 1918, to continue to consult the Dominions through the Governors-General in the old way. The sheer scope of the proposals, however, shows Long at his most innovative.[1]

He pressed strongly as Colonial Secretary for the retention of German colonies to be made an avowed British war aim, even urging the Foreign Office to make support for the return of Alsace-Lorraine to France conditional on French acknowledgement that Britain was to have sole rights over German colonial territory. 'If we restore the German Colonies', he warned Balfour, 'it is good-bye to the British Empire.'[2] Long had greeted Lansdowne's peace proposals of November 1916 with alarm and he consistently argued that the cabinet should come to a firm decision on the fate of Germany's colonies before taking any steps in the direction of negotiations, even after victory. Germany's tentative steps towards peace, made through Spain in September 1917 and soon known as the Madrid Telegram, prompted Lord Lansdowne to resurrect his letter of a year earlier, this time for publication in the Daily Telegraph.[3] Long was quite out of sympathy

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[1]For details of Long's ideas see extract from a private letter which he wrote to Sir Ronald Munro-Ferguson, 1 Aug. 1918, ibid., fos. 11-14.

[2]Long to Balfour, copy, 4 Oct. 1917, W.L.P., WRO 947/514.

[3]Lansdowne's peace letter was published in the Daily Telegraph on 30 Nov. 1917, having been refused by The Times. In Nov. 1916 Lansdowne had urged a compromise peace on the cabinet but had been much criticised by his Unionist colleagues, especially Balfour, Long and Lord Robert Cecil. He then decided to drop the matter and no more was heard for a year. Two days after publication a government communiqué stated that Lansdowne had not been in touch with any member of the cabinet, nor did his published views in any way reflect or represent the views of His Majesty's government.

with Lansdowne's views and insisted, contrary to the wishes of both Lloyd George and Balfour, that the Dominions must be kept properly informed about Germany's peace overtures.[1] He never deviated from the conviction that Britain should entertain no thought of peace before beating the Germans thoroughly and decisively in the field.[2]

As Colonial Secretary Long argued for an active policy of preparation so that Britain would go into a peace conference with a clear and firm determination to retain German colonies. He had no time for Woodrow Wilson's heady rhetoric about national self-determination and a crusade for democracy, and he was sceptical of all talk concerning the establishment of some form of international administration for the conquered territories.[3] Wilson's

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[1]Balfour intended to consult only France, Russia, Italy and Japan. Long insisted that the Dominions had a right to know if the British government was considering a negotiated settlement, and on 11 Oct. 1917 he despatched a secret telegram to the Dominion premiers disclosing the German approach. See Long to Balfour, copy, 9 Oct. 1917, and Balfour to Long, 10 Oct. 1917, W.L.P., WRO 947/515.

[2]Less than three weeks before the armistice Long wrote privately: 'I do most earnestly hope that whatever the sacrifice may be we shall not hold our hands now, but shall continue until we have really brought the German to his knees. To make peace before this has been accomplished would I honestly believe mean losing the real fruits of victory.' Long to General Sir William Birdwood, copy, 23 Oct. 1918, ibid., WRO 947/534.

[3]Long cited the British and French condominium in the New Hebrides as evidence of the cumbrous and unsatisfactory nature of shared systems of government. Joint mandates for colonial territories would, he asserted to a private correspondent, prove 'probably almost as bad as restoration to Germany.' Long to the Bishop of Pretoria, copy, 23 Nov. 1917, ibid., WRO 947/553.

diplomacy he regarded as naive and fanciful: Britain must look to her own future first and foremost, to that of her Empire next, and only lastly to the national aspirations of others. He readily exploited the furore engendered by evidence of systematic and deliberate ill-treatment of natives by Germany.[1] Long's humanitarian outrage was genuine enough,[2] but he seized on the evidence of German barbarity in Africa as a fillip to his campaign for the appropriation of all enemy colonies to be stated as a British war aim. To the Foreign Office objection that Britain would then be seen to be fighting a war of colonial aggrandizement Long was peculiarly indifferent.

He advocated a foreign policy of barter in dealing with Britain's allies over the question of colonial rights. Balfour, he urged, should be authorised to 'horse-trade' for the German possessions in Africa. To begin with, Britain should pursue a 'confidential but definite and binding agreement with the French that if we support her as to the lost Provinces [i.e. Alsace and Lorraine] she will support us over the Colonial question.'[3] Similar

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[1] See Papers Relating to German Atrocities and Breaches of the Rules of War in Africa, Cd. 8306 (1916); Report on the Natives of South West Africa and Their Treatment by Germany, Cd. 9146 (1918).

[2] It was on purely humanitarian grounds that Long argued with the Foreign Office, early in 1917, that Belgium should not be allowed to retain any African territory acquired during the war and that generous treatment of Belgium after the war should be made conditional on her good behaviour in German East Africa. Balfour would not agree. See Long to Balfour, copies, 19 Jan. and 6 Feb. 1917; Balfour to Long, 8 Feb. 1917, W.L.P., WRO 947/532.

[3] Long to Lord Robert Cecil, copy, 1 Mar. 1918, ibid., WRO 947/538. Cecil was at this time Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office.

confidential arrangements would then be made with the other Powers. Gradually, an interlocking system of secret agreements would be constructed in Britain's favour. Japan could be bought off by reaffirmed and binding promises of support in the Pacific; Belgium and Portugal could be placated with an undertaking that there would be no interference with their existing territories; and a few small concessions in East Africa would keep the Italians quiet for at least a couple of decades. As for the United States, Long believed it best to divulge nothing until all the necessary arrangements had been concluded, so as to ensure that Wilson's was a solitary voice of protest. Needless to say, Balfour had little taste for this reclamation of the Bismarckian principles of diplomacy, nor for the souring of relations with America which it involved, and Long's submissions fell on deaf ears. Consequently, there was little sympathy between the Foreign and Colonial Offices in the consideration of post-war imperial policy.

Long was also given overall charge of the supply, distribution and consumption of oil.[1] By the spring of 1917 German submarine attacks forced the government to take stock of its administrative machinery for securing adequate supplies. On 22 May Long was empowered by the war cabinet to examine the question, and a few days later he asked for, and received, emergency powers over

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[1]This paragraph is based on G. Gareth Jones, 'The British Government and the Oil Companies: The Search for an Oil Policy', Historical Journal 20 (1977).

all petroleum products. Working closely with John Cadman, the petroleum adviser to the Colonial Office, he set about building 'an administrative system capable of allocating priorities and preventing shortages developing in any crucial section.'[1] He continued to exercise overall responsibility for oil supplies until the end of the war, and in 1919 he had discussions with the French petroleum minister, Henri Bérenger, with the aim of securing an Anglo-French agreement. The so-called Long-Bérenger Agreement grew out of these talks but was never implemented as Lloyd George, claiming to have been unaware of the negotiations, cancelled the arrangement in May 1919. Later in the year Hamar Greenwood took over as the British minister responsible for petroleum policy. Although by any stretch of the imagination a rather dull field of governmental activity, Long was responsible for the last two years of the war for ensuring that the country had adequate supplies of oil during a period when the peacetime system of supply and distribution was patently unable to cope with the increased demands of war.

Relations between Long and Lloyd George were frequently strained, almost as if by habit. This was partly the result of Long's resentment at his exclusion from the war cabinet, interpreted as a slight to his standing within

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[1]Ibid., p. 664.

the Conservative party, and partly the consequence of Lloyd George's failure to consult his colleagues over changes in the membership of the government. A clash occurred in June 1917 over the offer to General Smuts of a seat in the war cabinet. Long objected vociferously, insisting that the appointment was a flagrant breach of constitutional practice for which there could be no justification.[1] He was ignored.

Nor was he consulted over the appointment of Winston Churchill as Minister of Munitions.[2] What really irritated Long was the realisation that Lloyd George now felt secure enough to ride roughshod over his Conservative ministers, though it is worth pointing out that Long opposed Churchill's return not on personal but on practical grounds. As he made clear to the prime minister on 18 July:

> I had, & have, no sort of objection to Churchill ... on personal grounds, ... but I felt, and feel, that the inclusion ... would weaken your Gov. & would certainly make it extremely difficult for many of my friends to continue their support ...[3]

This was a blunt reminder to Lloyd George that the government

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[1] Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 4, 1833-4.

[2] The appointment was announced on 18 July 1917. According to Lord Beaverbrook, Men and Power, 1917-1918 (London, 1956), p. 138, Long greeted the news with a veiled threat of resignation, a threat which he withdrew only as a result of Bonar Law's persuasions.

[3] Long to Lloyd George, 18 July 1917, quoted in Martin Gilbert, Winston Churchill, Volume Four, 1917-1922 (London, 1975), p. 29.

depended on Conservative backbench support. Long confided his fears to Sir William Bull:

> I fear it is the old story. The Tory party was hoodwinked & made hewers of wood & drawers of water for the Whips.... No register ∴ No election ∴ Ll.G. paramount. And in the interval he is to build up a Party & we are to find men, money and majorities.[1]

Long warned Bonar Law that Churchill must be kept firmly in his place and prevented from intefering with the work of other departments or influencing war strategy. Complaints against Lloyd George were, Long pointed out, already rife in the party:

> The real effect has been to destroy all confidence in Ll.G. ... he has deceived and "jockeyed" us. The complaints come from our very best supporters, quiet, steady, staunch men and W.C. has made things worse by stating at Dundee that the opposition to him springs from his political opponents.[2]

But the issue which caused the most bitter altercation was that of agricultural policy, a topic on which Long was an acknowledged spokesman within the party. As a general rule, Long would support wartime controls only if they could be shown to be absolutely necessary. He thought that controls over farmers were too rigorous and that many regulations were ill-conceived.[3] Lloyd George

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[1]Long to Bull, 22 July 1917, Bu.P., 4/16.

[2]Long to Bonar Law, 29 July 1917, B.L.P., 82/2/12.

[3]For example, Long poured scorn on the regulations affecting the sale of food, one of which restricted the number of courses which hotels and restaurants might serve. Long maintained that such a rule could only have been devised by

was plagued with differences in the cabinet over agriculture almost from the moment that he became prime minister. Frances Stevenson's diary entry for 17 February 1917 is revealing:

> D. was worried last night. His Unionist colleagues have been causing him trouble. I felt certain that sooner or later they would come to blows about the land, the old bone of contention.... D. was furious with them, & turned on them fiercely, & cowed them for the moment.... D. is sick of Long and says he thinks he will have to get rid of him. Long is disgruntled and wants to be included in the War Cabinet. This is impossible but he will not take 'no' for an answer.[1]

Long was particularly hostile to the introduction of guaranteed prices and wages, a control which he knew would be execrated by Tory landowners. He told Bonar Law that in peacetime he would have resigned immediately on the issue.[2] To give a guaranteed wage to all farm labourers, regardless of whether or no they were worth it, and to allow farmers to get more than the market price for their corn was, Long argued, an unjustifiable interference with market forces.

He campaigned hard, and unsuccessfully, to have the

'idiots and ignoramuses', for if there had to be any restriction at all then clearly it should be of maximum values. See memorandum by Long to Lloyd George, 8 Feb. 1917, W.L.P., WRO 947/659.

[1] A Diary by Frances Stevenson, pp. 144-5.

[2] Long to Bonar Law, copy, 18 Feb. 1917, W.L.P., WRO 947/563.

Corn Production Bill dropped. The Bill, which gave the government power to enforce particular types of cultivation, passed the Commons in April 1917, and although Long remained in the government he refused to accept either its provisions or its methods of operation. To Lloyd George he complained that it empowered the state 'to take control of a man's land away from him.'[1] Long bombarded R.E. Prothero, who had succeeded the Earl of Crawford as President of the Board of Agriculture, with letters and memoranda expostulating against the seizure of land by the military and the injustice of instructions to farmers concerning the compulsory ploughing of grasslands.[2]

Prothero, who had as good a claim to agricultural expertise as Long, does not seem especially to have resented Long's continual interference, no doubt recognising that Long's support from the landed element of the Conservative party could not be dismissed out of hand. Prothero was assailed with extracts of letters received from irate farmers: Long made wildly pessimistic forecasts, asserting repeatedly that the milk supply would fail and that near famine would sweep the land if policies were not drastically altered; he demanded agricultural information and statistics, and then frequently proceeded to challenge their accuracy; and he predicted that the alienation of the landed interest would result in political ruin for the Conservative party for several general elections to come.

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[1] Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 3, 1291-2.

[2] Long's papers contain some ninety letters of this type to Prothero. See W.L.P., WRO 947/585-6.

In short, Long made an egregious fool of himself.

By the early summer Long was describing the government's policy as one of 'wanton destruction' and the situation in Wiltshire as 'Bedlam'.[1] Prothero responded to Long's entreaties by asking Lord Derby to put a stop to the Army taking men from dairy farms, but Derby refused on the ground that women could do the work adequately. This decision prompted strong words between Long and the War Office.[2]

Long's indictments against the government's policy were reinforced by personal difficulties in Wiltshire with the local War Agricultural Committee. In August he discovered, much to his annoyance, that the commissioner for Wiltshire, one F.E.N. Rogers, had a low opinion of his capacities as a farmer, whereupon he accused the committee of acting from personal interest. In this allegation he was supported by the fact that the committee's members included one man who acted as agent to the owner of property adjoining his own on one side and another man who was a tenant of the landowner contiguous on the other side. The committee, Long contended, was being used by his neighbours to force him to make his own farms unprofitable. He thought seriously about taking legal action in an attempt to challenge the validity of instructions relating to the Rood Ashton estate.

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[1] Long to Prothero, copy, 27 May 1917, ibid.

[2] See Long to Prothero, copies, 28 May, 2 June, 4 June 1917; Prothero to Derby, copy, 23 May 1917; Derby to Prothero, copy, 29 May 1917, ibid.

Nor was Long prepared to pretend to his tenants that he approved of instructions to plough up good pasture. In October he distributed, to all the farmers on the Rood Ashton estate, a circular advising disobedience to the local committee's instructions.[1] This was to invite his tenants to defy the government. Long went on to describe the government's policy as 'ridiculous and dangerous' and the committee's methods as 'bluff and bluster'. Curiously, Prothero had some sympathy with Long's stand and even offered some assistance in fighting the Wiltshire committee. The trouble was, Prothero's instructions were not always carried out at local level. When Arthur Lee, the Director-General of Food Production, - Long had remarked, 'If that cursed fellow Lee isn't stopped, the whole of England will become one damned brown spot.'[2] - discovered that Long had advised his tenants to ignore the orders to plough an official complaint was lodged with Lloyd George on the not unreasonable ground that Long was engaging in 'clandestine activities' against the decision of a government of which he was a member. The prime minister rebuked Long for 'treachery' in the presence of both Lee and Prothero.[3]

At the root of Long's objections lay a fundamental dissatisfaction with Lloyd George's readiness to confront rather than to conciliate. Asquith, at least, had never

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[1]Circular letter by Long to his tenants, 13 Oct. 1917, W.L.P., WRO 947/660.

[2]Private papers of Lee of Fareham, p. 166.

[3]Ibid., pp. 168-9.

embarked on policies which set Unionist leaders at odds with their supporters. Long believed that Bonar Law was totally ineffectual, even tremulous, when it came to standing up to Lloyd George; and he was convinced that the landed element of the Conservative party should not be sacrificed out of loyalty to a prime minister interested only in remaining in office. In a memorandum to Bonar Law, dated 19 September 1917, Long observed that the condition of the party was 'more difficult, more puzzling, than any with which I have ever been confronted',[1] and a month later he was clearly considering rocking the political boat. A terse letter was despatched to Lloyd George on 23 October:

> There are a large number of people in Parliament and the Country who are good enough to place confidence in my opinion; may I remind you that when you did me the honour of inviting me to join your Government, you placed the number of the former very high.[2]

A few weeks later Long's threats became even more explicit: 'I ... fear if present policy is pursued I must come into violent and public controversy with the Board of Agriculture.'[3]

In peacetime Long would very probably have resigned and conducted a powerful campaign at the head of the landed interest. But winning the war had become his main goal, and to win the war he was prepared to make great sacrifices,

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[1]Memorandum by Long to Bonar Law, copy, 19 Sept. 1917, W.L.P., WRO 947/563.

[2]Long to Lloyd George, copy, 23 Oct. 1917, ibid., WRO 947/568.

[3]Long to Lloyd George, copy, 26 Nov. 1917, ibid.

even to be associated in the public mind with an agricultural policy which he detested. At times he bridled at the breakdown of party and cabinet government: 'the abolition of Cabinet Gov., the substitution of a "Council of Six", has created what is really an autocracy.'[1] Yet he never seriously doubted that Lloyd George's methods were the only ones suitable for winning the war, and this made him reluctant to take his campaign outside government circles. For many months Long's refusal to publicise his opposition deprived it of real power and he achieved nothing, even suffering permanent damage to his own lands.[2]

Gradually, however, Lloyd George was obliged to take note of Long's criticisms, which continued relentlessly into 1918. Although Long revelled in his role as champion of the farmers' liberties, he invariably opposed government restrictions and regulations solely on grounds of inefficiency or inefficacy. His memoranda became more and more outspoken. 'To threaten Agriculturists with imprisonment', he told the cabinet, 'if they fail to obey the orders of a local committee to plough up land which they know will not produce corn is to adopt the worst kind of "Prussianism"!'[3] Shortages, he averred,

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[1]Long to Prothero, copy, 3 Oct. 1917, ibid., WRO 947/585.

[2]In the summer of 1918 Long tried to enlist the support of the Royal Agricultural Society in his fight against the Wiltshire committee, but the Society's secretary, Cecil Parker, was understandably reluctant to become involved in a political controversy during wartime. See ibid., WRO 947/581.

[3]Letter by Long circulated to the cabinet, 25 Nov. 1917, ibid., WRO 947/662.

stemmed from 'confusion, overwork, and bad administration. If there were less red tape, less centralisation ... the people would very soon be better off.'[1] Writing from Rood Ashton on 10 February 1918 Long demanded an interview with Lloyd George to discuss the situation: 'I cannot sit still', he told Sir Maurice Hankey,

> and see my people here ... suffering severe privations when they know and I know that if it were not for those hopeless regulations we could keep up all our supplies.... The only justification for Rationing and Central Control is success and instead we have failure following failure ... the position is intolerable.[2]

Slowly, other Unionist ministers came to share Long's view of the regulations, realising that for the Conservative party to contemplate a general election with the farmers up in arms would be folly. On 22 February Austen Chamberlain wrote confidentially to Long to say that he took a dim view of Lloyd George's methods and to express the hope that Long would continue to use his influence to press for a change in the tone of government policy.[3] As the end of the war approached, and an election loomed, Lloyd George began more and more to feel his dependence on his Conservative colleagues. Lee's food policies had prompted the acerbity of the landed interest, just as Long had predicted, yet Lee remained wedded to the goal

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[1]Long to Hankey, copy, 8 Feb. 1918, ibid., WRO 947/663(b).
[2]Long to Hankey, copy, 10 Feb. 1918, ibid.
[3]Chamberlain to Long, 22 Feb. 1918, ibid., WRO 947/539.

of ploughing a million acres.. Long, Curzon, Bonar Law, Chamberlain and Milner all thought that this was a ludicrous policy. With an election approaching Lloyd George suddenly became more sensitive to issues which threatened the allegiance of his Conservative colleagues: once the war was over there was the danger that Long might take his case before the public, carrying a large section of the party with him.

Lloyd George decided to change tack over the controversial food programme: the sagacity of some of Long's criticisms was duly acknowledged; Lee would have to go, for, as Long had put it in February, the Food Ministry was 'doing fresh mischief every hour'.[1] Throughout the summer of 1918 Lloyd George demonstrated his political agility by manoeuvring Lee out of office with neither fuss nor bother. Lee's resignation, offered as a protest at the cabinet's refusal to endorse his food policies, was held in abeyance whilst he was persuaded, by a series of personal promises, to accept a peerage - Curzon, for example, reassured Lee that he might say what he liked about his department in the House of Lords. Lee was completely blind to the fact that he was being eased into a position of political insignificance by a group of Unionist ministers who detested his policies and a prime minister who felt obliged to defer to their wishes. The offer of a peerage kept Lee temporarily in limbo, so that his controversial policies could be quietly abandoned.

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[1]Long to Lloyd George, copy, 4 Feb. 1918, B.L.P., 83/2/21.

Once safely installed in the Lords, Lee's resignation, offered in the heat of the moment some six weeks earlier, was accepted.[1] But the hated Corn Production Act remained on the statute book, an irritant to Unionist agricultural spokesmen for much of Lloyd George's premiership. Many years later, in his War Memoirs, Lloyd George remarked laconically that Long had played the role of 'a passive resister over wartime agricultural policy.'[2]

Lloyd George's handling of changes in the military command early in 1918 also provoked Long's ire. Again, it was a question of consultation, not of fundamental differences over policy.[3] On 15 February Long informed Bonar Law that he was 'horrified' at Lloyd George's decision to replace Robertson as C.I.G.S.[4] But he did

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[1] Private papers of Lee of Fareham, pp. 177-81. Lee's political naivety is readily apparent from the diary entries of his wife, Ruth, for June and July 1918.

[2] Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 3, 1293.

[3] Lord Beaverbrook's account of the controversy surrounding the downfall of Robertson and Haig, in Men and Power, pp. 186-216, gives the impression that Long was likely to offer a serious challenge to Lloyd George in his struggle with the generals. It is true that Long can loosely be termed a member of the 'Military Party', but this means only that he believed that the generals should receive the unqualified backing of the politicians and that the military experts should be listened to. It does not mean that he believed that the mistakes of the military men should go unchecked. Lord Beaverbrook also claimed, in his chapter on F.E. Smith entitled 'The Cleverest Man in the Kingdom', that Long had acted with the 'three Cs' in securing a pledge from Lloyd George that Haig would not be dismissed. If true, this is curious, for Long had a very poor opinion of Haig's capacities as a leader of men in wartime.

[4] Long to Bonar Law, 15 Feb. 1918, B.L.P., 82/9/2. This letter is printed in full as an addendum to Beaverbrook, Men and Power, p. 415.

not threaten resignation; he merely advised caution on political grounds. He had little faith in Sir Douglas Haig. Indeed, nearly two years earlier Long had written:

> Have you noticed the steady and appalling increase in the death roll in France?... I am glad I am not a member of the War Committee. I believe the great mistake of the war will turn out to be the selection of Sir D.H..... I believe in success.[1]

These are hardly the words of a man who believed that the generals should be given 'carte blanche', and Long's letter of 15 February to Bonar Law, to which Beaverbrook attached much significance, - Beaverbrook regarded this letter as a threat to resign, though it contains no such threat - was in fact concerned only to point out the political pitfalls of taking abrupt action for which the Unionist party in parliament would be unprepared. Long advised that 'so tremendous a step should not be taken without much more deliberation'; he did not suggest that the step should never be taken. And just four days later Long was able to report that 'my difficulties on the question are removed.'[2] As usual, it had been Lloyd George's imperious manner which had vexed Long. Robertson went, Haig survived; Sir Henry Wilson took over as C.I.G.S.

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[1]Long to Bonar Law, 7 May 1916, quoted Davidson's Memoirs and Papers, p. 39.

[2]Long to Bonar Law, 19 Feb. 1918, B.L.P., 82/9/11. Sir Maurice Hankey believed that it was only a conversation which he had had with Long on 18 February which persuaded Long not to protest at Robertson's removal. See Lord Hankey, The Supreme Command, 1914-1918, 2 Vols. (London, 1961), 2, 779.

By the spring of 1918 Lloyd George felt obliged to deal once and for all with Long's importunate demands for a seat in the war cabinet. Lloyd George first considered moving Long to the Home Office, a plan which he discussed with Hankey on 3 February as the two men motored through France on their way back to Boulogne.[1] This was because Long had a strong case as Colonial Secretary, a fact which Lloyd George could not ignore. But if Long was moved to the Home Office then, it could be argued, there was no reason for him to join the war cabinet. By the end of the month Lloyd George had hit on an even more skilful ruse. Long was offered the cherished seat in the war cabinet, but as Minister without Portfolio. If he had accepted he would have had no departmental responsibilities and therefore less influence. Lloyd George calculated, correctly, that Long would choose to keep his department.[2] Having turned the offer down, Long could hardly continue to badger the prime minister for a seat in the war cabinet as Colonial Secretary.

From 1916 onwards Long had become involved in the evolution of franchise reform, and his influence over the 1918 Representation of the People Act has been considered in a recent scholarly study.[3] Nonetheless, Long's espousal

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[1] Ibid., 2, 773.

[2] A copy of Long's letter of refusal to Lloyd George, dated 1 Mar. 1918, may be found in B.L.P., 83/2/21.

[3] See Martin Pugh, Electoral Reform in War and Peace, 1906-18 (London, 1978). Long's role has also received more sketchy treatment in David H. Close, 'The Collapse of Resistance to Democracy: Conservatives, Adult Suffrage, and Second Chamber Reform, 1911-1928', Historical Journal 20 (1977). Long's papers contain much material relating to the Representation of the People Act. See W.L.P., WRO 947/675-80.

of reform even before the war has still not been fully appreciated. A memorandum of June 1914 reveals that, prior to his return to the Local Government Board, Long was far from irreconcilably opposed to electoral reform, to include women's suffrage. 'The Franchise', he had argued,

> is in a hopeless muddle.... This is costly, ridiculous and confusing.... I am entirely opposed to the extension of the franchise to women, but ... I would say that if ... a Commission were to recommend a comprehensive reform of our Electoral system ... my objection to Woman Suffrage would disappear.... We should get rid of the fantastical franchises which are so scandalously abused now, and we should make of it what it ought to be, a residential franchise.... The Commission ought to be able to report within twelve months, and enable us to legislate in 1916.[1]

It was imperative, he had insisted, that the Unionists 'shd. show that we are determined to deal with the franchise on a wide and satisfactory basis.'[2] That Long should have become one of the principal architects of wartime suffrage reform was not, then, wholly without precedent.[3]

He believed that to ignore the question was to risk

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[1]Memorandum by Long, 27 June 1914, L.P., Add. MS. 62403.

[2]Ibid.

[3]It is also worth pointing out that Long's closest political adviser, Sir William Bull, had for many years been an advocate of women's suffrage. Early in 1908 Christabel Pankhurst had told Bull that 'our Cause could not have a better exponent. We regard you, you know, as one of the few members of Parliament who really wish to help us.' Christabel Pankhurst to Bull, 14 Jan. 1908, Bu.P., 3/17.

social unrest, perhaps even revolution:

> ... if we ... try and retain the old system of franchise ... I believe a very dangerous feeling would have been created and the conviction would have gained ground that the governing classes were concerned to confine themselves to talking about democracy, without taking any real steps to give democracy power.[1]

The same is true of his attitude to reform of the House of Lords, which he proposed should be dealt with at the same time,[2] and to the women's vote. Recognising that women must eventually be enfranchised, he preferred to settle the issue once and for all than to gamble against a more radical bill during peacetime.[3] The eclipse of the sufragettes, an eclipse which might elapse with the ending of the war, presented an opportunity which Long quickly perceived as too good to miss. Suffice it to say, his espousal of an extended franchise was quite consistent with his broader political philosophy, for

> in his determination to promote a general measure of electoral reform Long epitomised the pragmatic Conservative statesman; to act quickly meant a moderate bill; delay brought the danger of a really radical one. Long's role in this cannot be overestimated, for alone among ministers he devoted himself to pushing ahead with reform from August 1916 onwards.[4]

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[1] Long to Sir Francis Chaplin of Southern Rhodesia, copy, 28 Dec. 1917, W.L.P., WRO 947/540.

[2] See Long to Lloyd George, 30 Mar. 1917, L.G.P., F/32/4/58.

[3] Petrie, Walter Long, pp. 210-1; Martin Pugh, 'Politicians and the Woman's Vote, 1914-1918', History 59 (1974).

[4] Pugh, Electoral Reform, pp. 70-1.

Long was decidedly unlucky with his health during the run up to the 'Coupon' election of 1918. He spent much of August at Rood Ashton convalescing from a severe bout of influenza, and on 30 August he wrote to Lloyd George to apologise for his lengthy absence.[1] On the following day he suffered a most extraordinary accident. Whilst trying to kill a bat which had somehow got into his room he hit himself in the leg with the shovel he was wielding, badly severing a vein.[2]

During his enforced furlough, Lloyd George evidently considered the possibility of dropping Long from the government. On 22 August the prime minister held a meeting of his closest supporters at Criccieth to discuss an autumn election. Sir Henry Norman, recently appointed to supervise Lloyd George's central office, kept rough notes. According to these notes, Lloyd George stated that he proposed to get rid of both Long and Hayes Fisher[3] - the latter had sealed his own fate by failing to prepare an adequate electoral register. This may have been said merely as a sop to Christopher Addison, who had become one of Long's most bitter critics, mainly because of the failure of the cabinet committee on Ireland.[4] On the other hand, there would certainly have been some advantage

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[1]Long to Lloyd George, copy, 30 Aug. 1918, W.L.P., WRO 947/682.

[2]Long to Lloyd George, copy, 1 Sept. 1918, ibid.

[3]Barry McGill, 'Lloyd George's Timing of the 1918 Election', Journal of British Studies 14 (1974), p. 117.

[4]See below, pp. 360-78.

for Lloyd George if he could have succeeded in ousting Long.

The prime minister desperately wanted to settle the Irish problem, but with Long in the government he had to move circumspectly. With Long out of the way, he may well have reasoned, Bonar Law could easily be cajoled into accepting a quick Home Rule Bill. Lansdowne was a spent force and so there would be no danger from the old team of 1916. Of all the leading Tories it was Long's opposition which Lloyd George most feared; and for good reason. Bonar Law the prime minister could control; Balfour was above party squabbles, playing out the role of elder statesman; Chamberlain was too loyal to be a trouble-maker; Curzon was clever and unpredictable, but too pompous to gain the widespread support of the party; and Milner was hardly a Conservative at all. But Long's capacity to make trouble remained undiminished. Nothing came of the Criccieth discussions; Long returned to work when his leg had healed.

He was certainly in favour of the party following Lloyd George, if only because nobody else would command sufficient support in the country to keep Labour out. In Long's judgement, Curzon was 'brilliant ... but our men won't have him' and Bonar Law 'would not receive anything like widespread support.'[1] He adopted the somewhat illogical position of supporting the coalition whilst simultaneously defending the right of each constituency association to

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[1]Long to Derby, copy, 10 July 1918, W.L.P., WRO 947/547.

select its own candidate. What really rankled was that Conservatives were expected to stand down in favour of Lloyd George Liberals. He told the party chairman, Sir George Younger, that he regarded it as quite unfair that the Conservative party should be called upon 'to sacrifice itself to a nodescript [sic] Party which has neither members nor policy. Surely as long as the Prime Minister is secure in the support of our Party he is not entitled to ask for more.'[1] Long wanted it both ways, exhorting that the party should 'certainly secure return of M.Ps who support Ll.G., if not for same seat for another. But you can't, and in my view have no right to, force Constituencies to adopt Candidates against their will.'[2]

Gradually, Long accepted the paralogism of his view, reluctantly conceding that local autonomy must inevitably clash with coalition discipline. By October he had moderated his tone, telling Younger: 'I quite agree that we must not oppose a sitting member who is prepared cordially to support the Prime Minister and the Government.'[3] And when it came to securing the return of Professor Hewins, who was not acceptable to his local association in Herefordshire, Long was not averse to Central Office using its influence to find him a seat.[4] Always keen to assert the independence of the Conservative party, Long was

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[1]Long to Younger, copy, 12 Sept. 1918, ibid., WRO 947/599.

[2]Long to Younger, copy, 15 Sept. 1918, ibid., WRO 947/682 (Long's underlining).

[3]Long to Younger, copy, 10 Oct. 1918, ibid.

[4]See Long to Younger, copy, 22 Nov. and Younger to Long, 23 Nov. 1918, ibid., WRO 947/683.

concerned lest Bonar Law, whom he described in October to Lord Derby as 'hopelessly lost',[1] submerge the party's identity in a coalition whose only function would be to serve Lloyd George.

He was reluctant to give his full backing to the 'Coupon' system out of a sense that it was somehow a disreputable innovation, a piece of political trickery which militated against the whole purpose of an election. Long was not, moreover, in favour of an election so soon after the end of the war, preferring instead to postpone the new parliament until at least the broad principles of the peace treaties had been hammered out.[2] His own 'coupon', number fifty-nine, was issued without fuss on 20 November, Lloyd George having abandoned any hope of dropping Long from the government by promoting him to the Lords. At the general election in December Long moved smoothly to St. George's, Hanover Square, a safe, decidedly up-market Conservative stronghold where a candidate of Long's calibre could expect to poll at least two-thirds of the vote.[3]

With the return of the coalition government to power, Long was appointed First Lord of the Admiralty. The offer

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[1]See Long to Derby, copy, 23 Oct. 1918, ibid., WRO 947/548.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Pelling, Social Geography, p. 30. In the event, Long received 90.2% of the poll in a straight fight against a Liberal.

was made in a manner which he could not refuse: his name was submitted to, and approved by, the King before Lloyd George troubled to inform him.[1] Long was not particularly pleased by this;[2] he would have much preferred to remain at the Colonial Office,[3] hoping to play a part in the peace conference as the government's representative for the Dominions and Crown Colonies.[4] Nevertheless, the Admiralty was an office to which Long had aspired for many years, and on 14 January 1919 he was sworn in as First Lord. The manner of Long's appointment was a deliberate manoeuvre on Lloyd George's part. In 1918 Long had been offered, and had turned down, the choice of the two top jobs in Ireland, the Chief Secretaryship or the Lord Lieutenancy.[5] He had also declined the offer of a peerage. This had left Lloyd George with a problem.

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[1] See Lloyd George to Long, 9 Jan. 1919, L.P., Add. MS. 62424.

[2] Long confided to Professor Hewins on 11 January 1919: 'The whole thing has come like a thunderclap. I left London on Thursday because I honestly believed the P.M. had made up his mind to leave me out.... I had no idea he was going to ask me to go somewhere else; in fact, I learnt this for the first time yesterday morning when I received a letter from him telling me that he had submitted my name ... and that H.M. had approved.' W.L.P., WRO 947/556.

[3] See Long to Younger, copy, 16 Jan. 1919, ibid., WRO 947/599.

[4] At the end of October Long had approached Edwin Montagu, the Secretary for India, with a view to making a formal protest to Lloyd George concerning their exclusion from the peace conference. Long also considered making a public protest. See Long to Montagu, copy, 29 Oct. 1918, ibid., WRO 947/576.

[5] See below, pp. 356-7. Lloyd George's desire to move Long to the Lords was undoubtedly connected with the row over agricultural policy and the prime minister's fear that Long might use his popularity in the Commons to challenge the government.

Long's support in the Commons still made him too dangerous to leave out, so Lloyd George manoeuvred him into the Admiralty in order to guarantee the stability of the government. Long told Sir William Bull that if given the chance he would have rejected the offer.[1]

Throughout the 'Coupon' election campaign, the Northcliffe press, in particular the Daily Mail, pursued an editorial policy of vilification against Long, whom it habitually referred to as a 'narrow-minded squirearch'.[2] Northcliffe put considerable pressure on Geoffrey Dawson to have The Times adopt a similar line, pressure which was steadfastly resisted.[3] One of the things for which Long was attacked was his attitude towards the unemployment problem, an attitude which, contrary to press misrepresentation, was very progressive.[4] But Long made the mistake of remarking publicly that soldiers returning from the war with no jobs to go to could do worse than to

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[1]Long to Bull, 12 Jan. 1919, Bu.P., 4/19.

[2]History of "The Times"; Volume Four, The 150th Anniversary and Beyond, 1912-1948 (London, 1952), part 1, p. 451.

[3]Dawson's refusal to toe the proprietorial line contributed significantly to his replacement as editor by Wickham Steed early in 1919.

[4]Long wrote to the Minister of Labour, Sir Robert Horne, on 8 November 1919: 'When it is evident to the Government that in certain parts of the country unemployment is becoming serious, it is the duty of the Government to do everything in their power to lessen it.' See W.L.P., WRO 947/741. Ever since he had been President of the Local Government Board under Balfour's premiership, Long had maintained that government should take steps to alleviate unemployment, if necessary by directly subsidising jobs. He did not believe that the Conservative party should be hidebound by the dogma of economic non-intervention.

take up bee-keeping as a profitable and enjoyable hobby. Northcliffe's newspapers systematically ridiculed him for this unguarded observation, with leading articles on the theme that Long had 'clearly got into the honeypot with both feet.' On 6 December 1918 the Evening News, in an article reporting the recommendations of the War Indemnity Committee, stated that 'the only objector to making Germany pay was a well-known Tory junker, of the bee-keeping variety.'

Long seized on the statement, which was not true, as the opportunity to bring a libel action against Associated Newspapers. A writ was duly issued and Northcliffe backed down: the Evening News printed a full apology, paid all of Long's legal costs and even donated one hundred guineas to a charity in his constituency.[1] Despite the satisfaction of his victory, Long deeply resented Northcliffe's malicious calumnies, confiding to Bull on 4 January that:

> It is evident I have done what I always said I wd. never do, viz: overstayed my welcome - when whole Press combine to secure one's dismissal ... there must be good reason: I don't think it is quite fair, I don't admit my admin.n. of C.O. or L.G.B. have been failures, but evidently this is not the general impression - as you know I am quite ready to go but one naturally hates to be kicked out as a failure or worse up.[2] (sic)

When the new cabinet was announced Northcliffe described

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[1] See W.L.P., WRO 947/674 for correspondence relating to the dispute.

[2] Long to Bull, 4 Jan. 1919, Bu.P., 4/19.

it as an 'appalling result', 'even worse than I foretold',[1] and his papers attacked Lloyd George relentlessly over the next few years. The prime minister's failure to sack the 'old Tory gang' became a stock item of their discursive comment,[2] and Associated Newspapers rarely missed an opportunity to censure Long's policies and decisions.[3] Lord Crawford recorded that '... the 'bon mot' in the lobbies is that the prime minister has resigned and Lord Northcliffe has sent for the King.'[4] Following disclosures of cabinet business late in 1920 Long told Sir Maurice Hankey that he detested the newspapers and regarded The Times as 'the lowest of the lot.'[5] He held Northcliffe in the utmost contempt, describing him to Moreton Frewen as a 'blackguard and a liar'.[6] From his retirement Long at least had the satisfaction of bringing a libel action, in the summer of 1921, which played a not insignificant part in persuading Northcliffe to give up his directorship of The Times and resign from Associated Newspapers.[7]

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[1] History of "The Times", 1912-48, part 1, p. 461.

[2] Ibid., p. 470.

[3] For example, in the dispute between Admirals Wemyss and Beatty in 1919 over the post of First Sea Lord the Northcliffe press demanded Wemyss's immediate retirement more to animadvert Long than to espouse the objective merits of Beatty.

[4] Crawford's diary, 15 Mar. 1920, The Crawford Papers, p. 406.

[5] Long to Hankey, copy, 6 Dec. 1920, P.R.O., Adm. 116/3623.

[6] Long to Frewen, 3 Nov. 1920, ibid.

[7] Northcliffe resigned with effect from 15 July 1921, his fifty-sixth birthday, but not before writing a most disingenuous letter to his solicitor: 'I find that I am held responsible for a libel action concerning Walter Long, whom I know and like.... In the last five years I have been completely out of touch with the business, often for months at a time.... I do not in the least object to responsibility, but I vigorously object to being responsible for that which I disapprove.' See Reginald Pound and Geoffrey Harmsworth,

Towards the end of 1918 Long had involved himself in proposals to overhaul the Secret Service, which he recognised as incompetent and inefficient. Like many of his colleagues he took an exaggerated view of the danger posed by so-called revolutionary groups and he spoke repeatedly of a strong 'Bolshevik Agency' which supposedly fomented strikes, waiting in the wings to seize power. To counter this 'threat' Long became a keen advocate of prophylactic measures: all suspicious persons were ruthlessly to be dealt with. Long tended to blame virtually all aspects of domestic discontent on Bolshevik agitators or on the surreptitious activities of German plotters and spies. His judgements on the industrial unrest of the postwar years could not have been more insensate; he saw the hand of sedition everywhere and reason quailed before the spectre of rampant communism. He had no evidence to support his allegations, save rash statements from people whose opinions were already as alarmist as his own, and often he was insouciant to the distinctions between Soviet Bolshevism and Labour, Ramsay MacDonald and Lenin.

Many of Long's suggestions were downright fatuous. For example, he pressed for a system of permits to check the flow of people into and out of London, even contending that the government should seek to 'stop altogether the stream of idle people into London for pleasure purposes, which is ... a great scandal.'[1] He also recommended that

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Northcliffe (London, 1959), p. 797.

[1]Memorandum by Long, n.d., probably late 1918, W.L.P., WRO 947/672.

severe restrictions should be imposed on overseas travel. This was Long at his most blinkered; he could not understand why a victorious Britain should lapse into strikes and disorder and so he searched for a scapegoat, in the process arriving at the most erroneous conclusions and proposing the most asinine policies. All that can be said in mitigation is that Long was by no means alone in his analysis of Britain's ills. The rather more down-to-earth Hankey remarked to Tom Jones early in 1920:

> The ministers ... seem to have 'the wind-up' to the most extraordinary extent about the industrial situation.... From a meeting yesterday evening I came away with my head fairly reeling. I felt I had been in Bedlam. Red revolution and blood and war at home ...[1]

Shortly before he left office Long realised the foolhardiness of some of his earlier outbursts. Nor did he continue to view with trepidation the imminent rise of the Labour party. In a classic Conservative exposition of faith in the good sense and moderation of the majority, Long wrote in August 1920, as the prospect of a miners' strike loomed before the cabinet:

> The idea that England is becoming more revolutionary, is foolish in the extreme.... The broad commonsense of our workpeople and of our stalwart, virile middle-class will save our country today and tomorrow as it has always done.
>
> We know perfectly well that whatever we do, whether it

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[1]Hankey to Jones, 17 Jan. 1920, quoted in Gilbert, Churchill, Volume Four, Companion, part 2, p. 1004.

be agreeable to the Labour party or the reverse, that it won't affect votes. Why should it? They have got their own organisation, their own Party; and they are determined to try their best to get into power - and I for one do not object to this in the least.[1]

As First Lord of the Admiralty Long was a great believer in the value of tours of inspection and frequent meetings with naval officers of all ranks. He spent much of his time travelling aboard the Admiralty yacht - he found these cruises very beneficial to his health - and he became a keen advocate of better recreational facilities for the men, partly as a means to guard against discontent below decks.[2] He was responsible for the appointment of a committee, under Admiral Habey, to investigate pay and conditions in the Navy. Long insisted that pay rises for all ranks were overdue, and he argued that because sailors spent long periods away from home, living in cramped quarters, they should be entitled to higher rates of pay than soldiers, airmen or policemen. He consistently argued that economies should not include cuts in sailors' pay.[3] Much of Long's time in 1919 was taken up with the dispute between Admirals Wemyss and Beatty, a tedious affair orchestrated by the Northcliffe press, over the post of First Sea Lord. The altercation was eventually resolved in November with Wemyss's retirement and Beatty's subsequent appointment, no doubt much to Lord Northcliffe's

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[1]Long to Sir Basil Zaharoff, copy, 20 Aug. 1920, W.L.P., 947/712.

[2]Memorandum by Long, n.d., ibid., WRO 947/704.

[3]For Long's views on naval pay see ibid., WRO 947/846.

satisfaction.[1]

Long's most important responsibility was the formulation of postwar naval policy,[2] a task which brought him into conflict with both the prime minister and the Treasury. At the end of the war Britain's fleet was still the largest and most powerful in the world. The government was aware that this situation could not be indefinitely maintained and the problem became one of restraining the American naval programme so as to enable Britain to place acceptable limits on defence expenditure. The need for financial stringency made it imperative that American shipbuilding be kept in check. Accordingly, on 26 March 1919 Long went to Paris to bargain with American representatives for reductions in their building programme.[3]

Aware of the need to reconcile the conflicting needs of defence and economy Long nevertheless felt obliged to request the cabinet on 19 June to approve naval estimates in excess of £170 millions. He encountered stiff resistance to this demand and on 5 July he presented his cabinet colleagues with a memorandum in which he pointed out that although the German navy might be extirpated, the government would be wise to bear in mind that a strong fleet was Britain's only guarantee that America would refrain from

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[1]See ibid., WRO 947/713.

[2]Long's involvement in the formulation of postwar naval policy has been considered in J. Kenneth McDonald, 'Lloyd George and the Search for a Post War Naval Policy', in A.J.P. Taylor, ed., Lloyd George: Twelve Essays (London, 1971) to which I am indebted. Long's papers also contain much material relating to naval policy. See W.L.P., WRO 947/685-718.

[3]McDonald, op. cit., pp. 192-3.

dictating Irish policy. Long was not suggesting that Anglo-American differences over Ireland might conceivably lead to armed conflict, merely that British naval strength forced Wilson to forego the contemplation of interference.[1] Austen Chamberlain, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, could not endorse such huge naval expenditure, and an argument between the Admiralty and the Tresury, redolent of old conflicts between Long and Chamberlain, soon developed. Although not envisaging war in the foreseeable future, Long wanted a large, powerful fleet, at the very least the equal of the American navy; Chamberlain, naturally enough, was more concerned with financial stringency.[2]

During this dispute Lloyd George toyed with the idea of creating a Secretary of State for Defence, to be responsible for all the services. Churchill, hoping to secure the job for himself, was a ready supporter of the plan. Lloyd George 'put up all the objections he could think of but they were not very strong and in reality ... rested on the difficulty of getting Walter Long out of the Admiralty.'[3] On 12 July Sir Henry Wilson recorded, after a talk with the prime minister, that Lloyd George 'quite agrees about the Defence Minister but has grave doubts as to whether he can move Walter Long, especially now that Walter is bitten with the charms of the 'Enchantress'!'[4]

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[1]Ibid., p. 195. [2]Ibid., pp. 196-7.

[3]Sir Henry Wilson's diary, 11 July 1919, quoted in Gilbert, Churchill, Volume Four, Companion, part 2, p. 739.

[4]Wilson's diary, 12 July 1919, ibid., p. 741. The 'Enchantress' was the name of the Admiralty yacht.

As usual, Lloyd George was afraid to tackle Long and risk trouble from the Conservative backbenches, and the plan was put into cold storage.[1]

Thus, Long and the Admiralty emerged the victors and on 24 July 1919 Long presented the approved estimates to the House of Commons. Chamberlain did not accept his defeat with good grace, circulating a Treasury memorandum two days later in which he called for substantial reductions in all three services if financial catastrophe was to be avoided.[2] Long's attitude towards the American navy was somewhat ambiguous. He admitted publicly that the United States could not seriously be regarded as an aggressive or potentially hostile power, yet he refused to sanction reductions which would undermine Britain's traditional supremacy at sea. America was not a potential enemy, but Britain had nonetheless to maintain a fleet whose size would be determined as if she might be. This rather illogical position is to be explained by the fact that Long privately harboured the suspicion that America wanted a large fleet, not to impose general disarmament but to force Britain to accept naval inferiority.

Quite apart from the question of Britain's postwar naval strength, Long had little time for America's new

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[1]It seems that later in the year Lloyd George considered moving Chamberlain from the Treasury to the Admiralty, but was again held in check by apprehension at Long's response. Wilson noted in his diary on 25 October 1919: 'LG wants to put Austen into the Admiralty & move out Walter Long, but as usual LG was afraid to kick out Walter.' Ibid., p. 941.

[2]McDonald, op. cit., p. 202.

status as a world power. Woodrow Wilson's talk of a war to end war, of disarmament, of freedom of the seas - all, he believed, was mere rhetoric, and it did not square with the policy of building a huge navy. As far as Long was concerned, Wilson was guilty of hypocrisy and humbug, for America

> talked about securing the peace of the world ... and the first thing they do is to try and establish a navy bigger than they have ever had before, and for which they can have no earthly use. It is pretty bad ... they are not practicing [sic] what they preach.[1]

Long was not, therefore, in agreement with the decisions arrived at on 15 August 1919 when the cabinet laid down the famous 'ten year rule', directed the Admiralty to undertake no new naval programmes, and made it clear that future estimates must be kept below a ceiling of £60 millions.[2] Lloyd George's postwar naval policy amounted to the gradual surrender of Britain's naval supremacy, a policy which Long found unpalatable but could not prevent. Long's own preference was for 'the big ship and parity with the next Power.' As First Lord he found himself responsible for a policy with which he was in fundamental disaccord.

One of Long's many tours of inspection disguised a more important diplomatic mission. In August 1920 he visited the Netherlands to inspect the restoration work

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[1]Long to Zaharoff, copy, 20 Aug. 1920, W.L.P., WRO 947/712.

[2]McDonald, op. cit., pp. 212-3.

being carried out by the Admiralty on the ports of Ostend and Zeebrugge.[1] At the same time he visited Heligoland to make sure that all German fortifications were being properly destroyed, reporting back to the cabinet that all was well.[2] But the real reason for his tour was to visit Denmark in order to conciliate the Danish government in the wake of disturbances caused in Copenhagen by British sailors. It was essential that Britain retain the right to use Copenhagen for refitting and repairs whilst operating in the Baltic against Soviet Russia. The unruly behaviour of British crews had placed this right in jeopardy, and Long's visit was designed to patch things up. He arranged for a few distinctions to be conferred on Danish statesmen, at the same time assuring the Danish government that British warships would be withdrawn as soon as the need to police the Baltic had passed.[3]

Long's trip was wholly successful. When he arrived the Danish authorities were on the point of making a formal request that British warships be withdrawn; when he left, Denmark had agreed that Britain should enjoy full use of all port facilities for as long as she considered necessary. By persuading the Danish government that the Russian naval forces at Kronstadt represented a real threat to Danish security, likely at any moment to sally forth once British

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[1]Long had previously made a tour of inspection, between 14 and 17 March 1919, of Zeebrugge Harbour and the devastation around Ostend. For papers relating to, and photographs of, this trip see Bu.P., 4/19.

[2]See Long's memorandum for the cabinet, 24 Aug. 1920, W.L.P. WRO 947/702/1.

[3]See Long's memorandum for the cabinet, 24 Aug. 1920, ibid., WRO 947/702/2.

ships were recalled, Long guaranteed Britain's role as policeman of the Baltic.[1]

This was Long's last important work at the Admiralty, for soon afterwards his health deteriorated sharply and he was confined to bed at Rood Ashton. For weeks at a time Long was unable to leave home and all reports and papers were sent to him so that he could make his views known by letter. On Christmas Eve Sir James Craig, now Financial Secretary to the Admiralty, intimated that Long should retire,[2] but he chose to hang on in the hope that his health would recover. Even now, when it had become quite clear that Long's administration of the Admiralty had become unsatisfactory, Lloyd George did nothing to hasten his departure. Clearly, though, Long's career was nearing its end: he was suffering from extreme arthritis of the spine.

Long was a member of Lloyd George's government for just over four years, and although he carried out his work diligently and served loyally he never overlooked the interests of the Conservative party. He was committed to coalition only as a necessity, and he was always very wary lest Lloyd George's ascendancy split the Unionists as Asquith's followers had been split. Part of the problem

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[1]See Long's account of his discussions with the Danish authorities, 30 Aug. 1920, ibid., WRO 947/702/3.

[2]Craig to Long, 24 Dec. 1920, ibid., WRO 947/717.

was that Long had little respect for Bonar Law, fearing that the Conservative leader was like plasticine in Lloyd George's hands. Long always regarded Bonar Law's insensitivity to the party rank and file as potentially dangerous. His opinion of his leader during this period is frankly revealed by a letter which he wrote to Lady Londonderry on 16 August 1917:

> B.L. does his work in the House quite admirably, his speeches are excellent, his replies to questions ready, quick and effective, he is thoroughly at home and manages the business very well, and yet he counts for nothing in this House with any Party - all look at him much in the same way as they do the Sergeant at Arms, or the Head Doorkeeper.... He has no following, no personal control.[1]

Long did not care to see the party acting as handmaiden to the fulfilment of Lloyd George's ambition, a role which seemed to be confirmed by the 'Coupon' election result of December 1918. As Long put it to his neighbour at dinner one night early in March 1919: 'George thinks he won the election. Well he didn't. It was the Tories that won the election.'[2] These feelings were compounded by a series of petty disputes with Lloyd George, invariably caused by the prime minister's dictatorial manner or sudden

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[1]Long to Lady Londonderry, 16 Aug. 1918, L.L.P., D/Lo/C 666(298).

[2]Frances Stevenson's diary, 5 Mar. 1919, A Diary by Frances Stevenson, p. 169.

bursts of activity.[1]

It is worth noting that Long only completely abandoned his aspirations for the party leadership during the very last years of his career. Even as late as October 1917, when Bull informed him of talk amongst the backbenchers that Bonar Law should resign, Long's smouldering ambition is evident. His response to Bull's approach was prompt and unequivocal:

> If ... a vacancy does occur I shall not hesitate to accept nomination if my friends desire me to stand.... I am v. much afraid there is a tendency to create a new party of which the leaders would be L.G., B.L. and W.C. while our Party will be expected to be their followers.[2]

Throughout his four years in Lloyd George's government

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[1]A good example of this kind of petty incident occurred in November 1919 over the commanding officer of the 'Ramillies' who had somewhat indiscreetly entertained a Russian general on board his ship. Lloyd George demanded that the officer be disciplined by the Admiralty. Long maintained that naval officers should continue to exercise independent discretion when entertaining aboard H.M. ships. Long confided to Craig: '... of course the Officer ... made a grave blunder, ... but this was, and is, a matter solely for the First Lord.... It is one of the P.M's failings. However brilliant a man may be, he must have some failings, and I never faltered in my determination that the first time he interfered between me and my responsibility ... would be the last....' The anodyne intervention of Craig put an end to this venial altercation, and Lloyd George backed down. It is, however, a good example of the kind of arguments which developed between Lloyd George and Long, arguments with the potential to threaten the stability of the government. In this case, the Navy and the bulk of the Conservative party would certainly have supported Long. See St. John Ervine, Craigavon, Ulsterman (London, 1949), pp. 366-7.

[2]Long to Bull, 31 Oct. 1917, Bu.P., 4/16.

Long never forfeited his popularity with, or command over, the Tory backbenches - even after December 1918, when the general election brought large numbers of new MPs to the House, Long remained an influential force. Bull and the London Conservative members formed a nucleus around which Long's followers gathered. Whenever there was talk of the party deserting Lloyd George - and there was a good deal of this kind of talk from 1919 onwards - Bull was always asked to sound out Long, almost as if the backbenchers would consider stepping out of line only with Long's approbation. Whilst Long backed Lloyd George, the party would do likewise.[1]

The significance of Long's membership of the Lloyd George coalition lies not so much in his work at the Colonial Office or the Admiralty, which coruscates neither with ingenuity nor achievement, but in the political stability which was afforded by his popularity with Tory stalwarts in the Commons. Lloyd George baulked again and again at moving Long from the Admiralty, let alone insisting that he retire to the Lords, because he knew that his own parliamentary support was conditional on Conservative goodwill and that this goodwill was not guaranteed by the

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[1]Towards the end of 1919, for example, Bull told Long that there was increasing dissatisfaction with Lloyd George amongst Tory MPs and that there were rumours of a plot to desert him. Long replied: 'I can't believe B.L. wd. betray L.G. but he was in the intrigue agst. Asquith!... I shall support Ll.G. unless he goes wrong on Navy or some other big question, in wh. case I shall quit, but I will join no cabal.' (Long's underlining) The rumours quickly died down. See Long to Bull, 1 Jan. 1920, Bu.P., 5/1.

mere fact of Bonar Law's allegiance. Lloyd George was, of course, aware that there was dissatisfaction amongst Tory MPs; but he was also aware that this dissatisfaction could be contained whilst Long remained in the government. Even when, in 1920, Long's ill health rendered him incapable of carrying out his duties, Lloyd George wisely preferred to grant several months convalescence rather than force a resignation and so risk disruption from Long's followers in the House.

What Lloyd George could not afford to contemplate was a Conservative party split into two factions with even a minority following Long into opposition. Bonar Law might be efficient and dependable, Chamberlain loyal and trustworthy - but a Conservative rump was no good to Lloyd George. Long's unique position amongst the party rank and file, a position of confidence, popularity, respect and authority carefully nurtured and consolidated over the years, made him a central pillar in Lloyd George's support. Removal of the pillar posed at least the possibility of collapse.

CHAPTER SEVEN

IRELAND AGAIN: THE ROAD TO PARTITION AND THE MAKING OF THE GOVERNMENT OF IRELAND ACT

The crushing of the Easter Rebellion by the superior might of British armed force, and the subsequent collapse of Lloyd George's ill-timed home rule proposals, left nationalist Ireland cowed but hardly contented. A remark made by Leo Amery seemed to sum up the position: 'No British government can solve the Irish problem by legislation and no British statesman can solve it by negotiation.'[1] In common with other senior politicians, Long began by 1917 to hope that some settlement might come from Ireland itself.

Southern Unionists realised that the old policy of resistance to all forms of home rule was no longer tenable: the Ulstermen had made it clear that they would readily abandon the Union as the price of their own exclusion; leading Conservative politicians made no secret of their desire to see an end to the Irish problem in British politics; and Long, who had been the Southern loyalists' most ardent and influential champion, now held firmly to the opinion that a Home Rule Bill excluding Ulster and offering protection to the Southern minority was the best that might be hoped for. Anxious to find some settlement, Lloyd George accepted that he would have to carry the

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[1]Memorandum by Amery, 18 Feb. 1917, W.L.P., WRO 947/409.

Unionists with him, particularly Long and Lansdowne. Fortunately for the prime minister, Long was ready to support a new initiative, though he was still sure that home rule and partition would make strange bedfellows. In May 1917 he wrote:

> Believe me, I don't write as a Unionist, I will support any fair workable measure which will be accepted by Ireland, even though at first there has to be some compulsion, but Partition they won't have.[1]

In the spring and early summer of 1917 the government considered whether to proceed with home rule, and in April Curzon, H.E. Duke and Christopher Addison were asked to prepare a draft bill, to replace the Act of 1914, which was on the statute book but suspended for the duration of the war. Long and Bonar Law were not happy with this course. On 15 May Long warned Lloyd George: 'I am satisfied that you are on the edge of the precipice as regards Ireland.... Ireland will never accept a scheme devised on this side.'[2] Lloyd George was persuaded to drop the idea of a bill and to promote a convention in Dublin instead, a course which kept the Conservative party united behind the government. Addison, who had prepared a bill to give immediate home rule with exclusion for a six county Ulster and provision for a Council of All Ireland, 'strongly resented this week-kneed suggestion'[3]

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[1] Long to Lloyd George, copy, 11 May 1917, ibid., WRO 947/568.

[2] Long to Lloyd George, 15 May 1917, L.G.P., F/32/4/75.

[3] Addison, Four and a Half Years, 2, 380.

and predicted, erroneously, that 'a spectacular Convention will not succeed.'[1] On 19 May Long promised the prime minister that the convention would have his whole-hearted backing.[2] Lord Midleton accepted the invitation readily enough, though he, too, would not contemplate partition as the ultimate solution. With Southern Unionist support the Irish Convention thus assembled, on 25 July 1917, at Trinity College, Dublin, charged with finding some basis for the future government of Ireland.[3]

Lloyd George had taken a significant step on the road to home rule without alienating, as he had done in 1916, his Unionist colleagues in the cabinet, although the amnesty for the rebels of the Easter Rising went some way to vitiate this new spirit of compromise amongst Conservatives at Westminster. As Long had some months earlier remarked to the Chief Secretary, 'the Irish are a very bad people to run away from...'[4] Announced by Bonar Law on 15 June, the release of the prisoners soured the feelings of many Unionists. Long insisted that Duke's decision was misguided and foolhardy. There was nothing mean-spirited or vindictive in this. It was simply that Long recognised that to release the Irish rebels would do nothing either to erode their extremism

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[1]Ibid., 2, 381.

[2]Long to Lloyd George, 19 May 1917, L.G.P., F/32/4/76.

[3]For Southern Unionist participation in the Convention see Buckland, Irish Unionism: The Anglo-Irish and the New Ireland, pp. 83-128.

[4]Long to Duke, copy, 29 Dec. 1916, W.L.P., WRO 947/409.

or to smooth the path towards a political settlement.

Events proved him right, for on the very day of their release the rebels petitioned Woodrow Wilson in the name of 'the Provisional Government of the Irish Republic', prompting a march through the streets of Dublin and the wrecking of the jail at Cork.[1] By the end of June, Irish newspaper headlines painted a picture of escalating disorder: 'Outrage in County Clare. Shots at motor car party'; 'Cattle Maiming in County Louth'; 'Disorders in Dublin. Chamber of Commerce warns Irish Executive'; 'Baton charge in Ennis'. As the tension mounted, fuelled by the death of the hunger striker, Thomas Ashe, the government pursued a policy of weak coercion and the Convention continued its deliberations. Meanwhile, Sinn Fein made it clear that the parliamentary path had been deserted in favour of a less compromising, and more sanguinary, form of nationalism. As Tim Healy expressed it to Long in August 1917:

> I tremble lest the Govt. be driven ... into extremer action.... Duke is doing well by not doing too much.... He is faced with a situation which never existed since the Union - a recklessness of suffering and death - almost a thirst for sacrifice. No govt. can encounter it with success by repression.[2]

As yet the republican extremists within Sinn Fein were a

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[1]Colvin, Life of Carson, 3, 294.

[2]Healy to Long, 28 Aug. 1917, L.P., Add. MS. 62422.

minority, but they were a growing and ever more popular minority.

Rather surprisingly, Long has been allotted only a minor role in the many published accounts of Anglo-Irish history during the period leading up to partition, for it was Long who possessed what has justly been described as 'probably the most powerful single voice on Irish affairs in British governing circles'[1] between 1916 and 1920.

On 28 February 1918 Lloyd George offered Long the post of Lord Lieutenant of Ireland with plenary powers - the offer was made, of course, partly because Long was causing difficulties over agricultural policy and Lloyd George would have liked to remove him from the Commons. Long refused, giving frail health as his reason, whereupon the prime minister invited him to join the war cabinet as Minister without Portfolio. This offer, too, was rejected, though Long was sorely tempted by both opportunities.[2] He had already been offered the Chief Secretaryship, again with plenary powers. He had declined partly because he wanted to continue with his colonial work, but mainly because he wanted to remain in London

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[1] Boyce and Hazlehurst, 'The Unknown Chief Secretary', p. 301

[2] Long's diary, 1 Mar. 1918, W.L.P., WRO 947/952; Long to Lloyd George, 1 Mar. 1918, L.G.P., F/32/5/9.

where he could keep a close eye on a prime minister whom he had never trusted. At the beginning of February Long had proposed that Macpherson be appointed Chief Secretary and that Londonderry be made Lord Lieutenant.[1] For himself, Long had other plans.

Faced with Long's persistent refusals to take a full time Irish job, Lloyd George was rather anxious by the beginning of March as to what line Long intended to adopt.[2] Apart from the trouble which Long could cause on the Conservative backbenches, he was the one man who had the trust of both Ulster and the Southern Unionists. With Long at the head of Irish affairs any settlement would be much easier to steer through parliament. On 4 March Long reiterated that he regarded MacPherson as the best candidate for the Chief Secretary's job, with H.A.L. Fisher a poor second. He also told Lloyd George exactly what he had in mind for himself:

> You put me at the Head of all the Departments concerned, to represent the Cabinet ... and I really believe in 6 months you would have Ireland quiet and be able to carry a measure of self-government.... I would go to Ireland occasionally ...[3]

On the same day, the 'Call to Unionists' appeared in the press, a symptom of the struggle going on within the Irish Unionist Alliance between those who would not abandon the

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[1]Long to Lloyd George, copy, 4 Feb. 1918, W.L.P., WRO 947/569.

[2]Riddell, War Diary, p. 317.

[3]Long to Lloyd George, 4 Mar. 1918, L.G.P., F/32/5/10.

Union and those who were prepared to work for a reasonable settlement.[1] It was also an indication to Lloyd George that there might be trouble from a section of the Southern Unionists. For the moment, the prime minister chose to ignore Long's request.

That same month, March 1918, the cabinet decided that there must be Irish conscription, and Lloyd George opted for the 'dual policy' - home rule in return for compulsion. Long argued that the government should go boldly ahead with conscription and face the consequences, evolving a workable home rule scheme over a much longer period. The 'dual policy', he contended, would mean 'a row with both sides and no satisfaction. I should deal with the two issues separately.'[2] Finally, on 5 April, after months of debate and discussion, the Irish Convention voted in favour of self-government for all Ireland,[3] thus inviting the government to make the next move. Next day, a Saturday, the cabinet met to discuss the Irish problem. George Barnes made it clear that he could only agree to conscription 'if Home Rule is really carried' whilst Churchill was

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[1]The 'Call to Unionists' demanded maintenance of the Union, a stricter enforcement of the law, and conscription for Ireland. By early April it had been signed by nearly 6,000 people. For a list of prominent citizens amongst the signatories see the Irish Times, 3 Apr. 1918. By June it was claimed that over 13,000 signatures had been obtained, but this was probably exaggerated for effect. See Buckland, Irish Unionism: The Anglo-Irish and the New Ireland, p. 158, n. 54.

[2]Long to Bonar Law, 4 Apr. 1918, B.L.P., 83/2/2.

[3]See Report of the Proceedings of the Irish Convention Cd. 9019 (1918). Sinn Fein had not sent representatives, but the Southern Unionists voted in favour of an Irish parliament within the U.K., a major departure from earlier Loyalist attitudes towards home rule.

characteristically 'vehement for the immediate forcing through of the measure - "a battlefield decision".'[1] It was decided that the 'dual policy' represented the only feasible way forward.

Long promptly advised Bonar Law to put pressure on Lloyd George to appoint a cabinet committee to work out a bill strictly in accordance with the Convention's recommendations. He thought that General Smuts would make a good chairman and that the government should commit itself no further than to promise to submit the bill to parliament.[2] A Military Service Bill providing for conscription in Ireland was duly introduced in the Commons on 9 April, but there was to be a delay pending an Order in Council. The cabinet decided that a Home Rule Bill should be drafted immediately, to be introduced before the final vote on conscription. Much to his surprise, Long was on the 11th appointed to chair a committee charged with preparing an Irish bill as speedily as possible.[3] In Long's own words, the idea that he should end up being entrusted with the preparation of home rule was 'very odd'.[4]

That the government should embark on such a course in

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[1]H.A.L. Fisher's diary, 6 Apr. 1918, MS. Fisher 10.

[2]See Long to Bonar Law, 7 Apr. 1918. B.L.P., 83/2/7.

[3]The official title was the 'Committee on the Government of Ireland Amendment Bill'. It consisted of Long (chairman), Austen Chamberlain, Curzon, Duke, George Cave, H.A.L. Fisher, Smuts, Addison, Barnes and Hewart (the Solicitor-General). It has been discussed by John Kendle in 'Federalism and the Irish Problem in 1918', otherwise this practice run for the Government of Ireland Bill of 1920 seems largely to have been ignored by historians.

[4]Long to Balfour, 14 Apr. 1918, B.P., Add. MS. 49777.

such haste can be explained by sheer necessity. The huge German offensive of March 1918 and the threatened collapse of the British Fifth Army raised an acute demand for men, and the report of the Irish Convention seemed to provide the ideal opportunity for linking home rule with conscription. The appointment of Long was one of Lloyd George's more inspired strokes. It guaranteed the acquiescence of Conservative MPs; it reassured the Ulstermen, for short of asking Carson to draft a bill - an absurd prospect - there was no one else who would receive as much trust from the Ulster Unionists; and it indicated that the Southern loyalists would not be given short shrift in the attempt to find a quick solution. And as Colonial Secretary, Long was guaranteed to look for a solution which would best serve the interests of the Empire. All in all, Long's appointment was an adroit move on Lloyd George's part. Long had also begun to espouse publicly the merits of federalism, a cause with which he had flirted ever since home rule had become inevitable in 1914, so that his appointment was also acceptable to the group of Tory Federalists whose activities added to Lloyd George's measure of political troubles.

Long's cabinet committee held its first meeting at 3 p.m. on Monday 15 April. It made little headway. Lloyd George now decided that Long should prepare a bill on his own, and when the committee met on the following day it endorsed the prime minister's decision, with only Christopher Addison

mounting any protest. Addison was overruled; Long was given authority to draft a bill personally,[1] subject only to the provision that he should use the report of the Irish Convention as a basic framework.[2] Duke reported that a revolution in Ireland was 'imminent' and that the government forces would be insufficient to deal with it. Lord French, however, said that the forces at his disposal were adequate provided that he was 'allowed to use all modern scientific means of warfare', including aeroplanes. When the cabinet dispersed Lloyd George and Bonar Law remained behind, and H.A.L. Fisher was offered the Chief Secretaryship. He refused on the ground that he would be 'very averse to enforcing conscription' and that he would prove 'not strong enough'.[3] That afternoon Lloyd George made a speech announcing the government's intention to proceed with home rule.

The news that Long had been asked to prepare a bill was greeted by the witticism, 'To set Walter Long drafting a Home Rule Bill is like asking the Bishop of London to draft the regulations of a 'maison tolérée'';[4] and one historian has called it 'an incredible assignment'.[5] What it shows, however, is that Lloyd George was determined to

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[1] Addison, Politics from Within, 2, 244-5; idem, Four and a Half Years, 2, 511.

[2] Cabinet minutes, 16 Apr. 1918, P.R.O., WC 392, CAB 23/6.

[3] H.A.L. Fisher's diary, 16 Apr. 1918, MS. Fisher 10.

[4] Sir Almeric Fitzroy, Memoirs, 2, 674. Fitzroy claimed that the remark emanated either from Dillon or from Carson.

[5] Alan J. Ward, 'Lloyd George and the 1918 Conscription Crisis', Historical Journal 17 (1974), p. 115.

bludgeon his colleagues into accepting an Irish settlement provided that he could keep the leading Unionists on his side. Two days later, on the 18th, the new Military Service Bill received the royal assent; but the deteriorating situation in Ireland forced repeated postponement of its implementation, and when the armistice came on 11 November conscription had still not been enforced in Ireland.

When the cabinet met on 23 April Long argued that his bill should be consistent with federalism for the whole of the United Kingdom; he also warned that he might find himself unable to support any bill which was not.[1] This statement seriously dented the prospects for an early settlement, as Lloyd George now knew that he must commit his government to federalism if Ireland was to be given home rule with Long's backing. Long was beginning to have doubts as to the wisdom of proceeding further. As he pointed out to Bonar Law, the real difficulty was 'to answer the question "Why touch H.R. now?" It is not appeasing Nationalists. It is enraging Ulster.'[2] Christopher Addison, on the other hand, believed that Long's insistence on watertight safeguards would render the bill useless. 'If we set up a Parliament at all', he recorded on 26 April, 'we must at least do it the justice of trusting it in a reasonable way.'[3] In Long's view,

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[1]Cabinet minutes, 23 Apr. 1918, P.R.O., WC 397, CAB 23/6; Long to Bonar Law, 22 Apr. 1918, B.L.P., 83/2/25.

[2]Long to Bonar Law, 26 Apr. 1918, ibid., 83/2/29.

[3]Addison, Four and a Half Years, 2, 519-20.

continued nationalist opposition combined with the hostility of the Roman Catholic hierarchy to conscription completely altered the situation, rendering it pure folly to grant home rule in the circumstances.[1]

Long's views on the advisability of an early bill seem to have changed almost within a week. On 19 April he was quite sanguine, confiding to his diary: 'Made great progress with H.R. Bill. What an occupation for me!'[2] But eight days later he recorded: 'Grave news as to Ireland.... Impossible to proceed with H.R. or indeed Conscription for the moment.'[3] Long changed his mind in response to government information that Sinn Fein was conspiring with Germany to land arms in Ireland. On 12 April a German agent had been arrested and the government believed that Germany intended to assist Sinn Fein in fomenting another rising.[4] Thus, Sinn Fein succeeded in destroying what had hitherto been the serious intention of the government to pass home rule as quickly as possible.

On Monday 29 April Lloyd George, Long, Bonar Law, Lord French, General Byrne, H.A.L. Fisher, Christopher Addison and Lord Midleton gathered in the cabinet room at Downing Street to consider Irish security. The prime minister

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[1]See Long to Bonar Law, 27 Apr. 1918, B.L.P., 83/2/32.

[2]Long's diary, 19 Apr. 1918, W.L.P., WRO 947/952.

[3]Long's diary, 27 Apr. 1918, ibid.

[4]This information was not made public until May: on 18 May Lord French issued a proclamation stating that the government would take strict measures to crush the 'German Plot' and some 150 republicans were arrested, of whom nearly a third were incarcerated at Holyhead.

argued that British public opinion would applaud the violent enforcement of conscription as a response to Sinn Fein's intended treason. He suggested using aeroplanes to disperse hostile crowds. Long, too, advocated a resolute show of force.[1] When the cabinet committee met later that afternoon Long announced that a German landing was likely and that Conservative opinion had hardened against an early bill. The committee then considered Long's draft proposals and there was heated objection to what some, principally Addison, considered his over-protective clauses for Ulster. Lloyd George nonetheless insisted that Long should put everything else to one side and continue with his work.[2] Clearly unhappy with the prime minister's instructions, Long had an interview with Bonar Law on 2 May and made it clear that he could not support a policy of home rule for the moment.[3] He was not turning his back on home rule, merely asking for a more favourable climate.

Long's committee had been divided from the start, even as to its function - inevitable given its composition. As a practical politician, Long was determined to produce a bill that would safely pass the Commons. Unlike Addison, he recognised that it was futile to attempt to frame a bill which would both satisfy the nationalists and placate Ulster. Strongly supported by Austen Chamberlain, Long

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[1] H.A.L. Fisher's diary, 29 Apr. 1918, MS. Fisher 10.
[2] Addison, Politics from Within, 2, 245.
[3] Long's diary, 2 May 1918, W.L.P., WRO 947/952.

wanted a federal bill; other members hoped to rule out federalism once and for all.[1] On 7 May Long laid his views squarely before the prime minister. He advised Lloyd George to leave the actual government of Ireland to Lord French and pass a home rule bill in the meantime, but suspend its operation until all nationalist extremists had been dealt with, then the new Act could be brought swiftly into operation by an Order in Council.[2] By passing a bill the government would prove its commitment to an eventual settlement, and by suspending home rule the government would gain breathing space in which to deal with the minority amongst the nationalists which threatened any reasonable solution. What Long did not appreciate at this stage was that the nationalist extremists could not easily be rooted out and a more moderate climate engendered.

Two days later the cabinet committee met again. It decided unanimously that strict enforcement of the law must be the pre-requisite of any grant of home rule and that because the 'atmosphere in Ireland at this moment was the most unfavourable that could be conceived'[3] there could be no question of an early bill. Long reported to the cabinet that 'the Committee were of one mind in deprecating any statement in Parliament which would seem to imply that the Bill could be taken at an early date',

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[1]Thomas Jones, Whitehall Diary: Volume Three: Ireland, 1918-25 (London, 1971), p. 5.

[2]Long to Lloyd George, 7 May 1918, L.G.P., F/32/5/31.

[3]Draft statement by Chamberlain on the proceedings of the Irish Committee, 9 May 1918, A.C.P., AC 31/1/7. Chamberlain's draft was incorporated into Long's memorandum for the cabinet.

for it was first necessary that the government should 'enforce the law, and above all, put down with a stern hand the ... conspiracy which appears to be widespread in Ireland.'[1] In a private letter to the prime minister Long confirmed that no bill could be hoped for until at least after the Whitsuntide recess.[2] Not surprisingly, the government's intention to introduce Irish conscription was quietly shelved.

On 4 May Edward Shortt took over as Chief Secretary, an appointment which was made partly in response to Long's demand, late in April, that Duke would have to go if the cabinet committee was to continue to work on home rule.[3] Long had been pushing for months for a reconstruction of the Irish administration, and the change was tacit acknowledgement of his growing influence in Irish affairs. Indeed, before accepting the Chief Secretaryship Shortt went to Long to find out whether he could count on his support.[4] The appointment also afforded the newspapers an opportunity to indulge in some light-hearted comment on 'the Long and the Shortt' of the Irish situation. The Daily Express even produced a piece of doggerel to commemorate the occasion:

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[1]Memorandum by Long, 9 May 1918, W.L.P., WRO 947/413h; L.G.P., F/32/5/40; Long's diary, 9 May 1918, W.L.P., WRO 947/952; Jones, Whitehall Diary: Ireland, 1918-25, pp. 7-8.

[2]Long to Lloyd George, 9 May 1918, L.G.P., F/32/5/39.

[3]See Long to Lloyd George, copy, 25 Apr. 1918, W.L.P., WRO 947/569. Long's private opinion of Duke is clear: 'Duke was really no better than Birrell, in fact I think he was worse.' Long to Colonel J.H. Rivett-Carnac, copy, 29 May 1918, ibid., WRO 947/588.

[4]H.A.L. Fisher's diary, 26 Apr. 1918, MS. Fisher 10.

Some years ago a chieftain strong
Was found in Mr. Walter Long;
Today a stranger holds the fort,
A Duke gives place to Edward Shortt.
May his administration fuse
The Shorttest cut, the Longest views![1]

By the time that the cabinet committee decided on 9 May not to proceed with an early home rule bill, Long had become convinced that Ireland could only be settled within the wider context of federalism. He circulated to the cabinet a lengthy memorandum setting forth his own conception of the way forward:

> If I had my way I would decide that the federal system must be adopted, and I would make this declaration when bringing in the Irish Bill.... What I would like to do would be to make the Irish Bill, not merely as it is now, consistent with the Federal plan, but actually in words a part of a Federal plan. I would like to set up English, Scottish and Welsh committees ... to prepare the particular constitutional systems suited to their various ideas and respective countries; for the powers which the subordinate legislatures are to exercise will have to be settled by the Government of Ireland Act. They will be the same for England, Scotland, and Wales as they are for Ireland.[2]

Just as in 1905, when he had been Chief Secretary, Long still believed that Ireland should be treated in much the

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[1] Daily Express, 2 May 1918.

[2] Memorandum by Long, 9 May 1918, W.L.P., WRO 947/413g (Long's underlining); this memorandum is very similar in content to one dated 12 June 1918 and written by Sir William Bull, ibid., WRO 947/413t.

same way as the rest of the United Kingdom, though his opinions had otherwise altered very greatly. His work at the Colonial Office seems to have encouraged him in favour of a federal solution, as much to hold the Empire together as to solve the Irish problem. Lloyd George could not agree to make an Irish bill dependent on a general scheme of federalism, for wartime constitutional reform on this scale was just not feasible, although the Coalition Liberal chief whip, Frederick Guest, reckoned that about one hundred Conservative MPs were ready to support federalism in May 1918.[1] As Leo Amery was quick to point out, the attraction of federalism was that it would 'secure for Ulster every possible advantage it would get out of exclusion and yet maintain, in principle at least, the unity of Ireland.'[2]

But why had Long become such a keen advocate of federalism? Unequivocal abandonment of the 'dual policy' was, Long argued, the simplest course, but this ran the risk of provoking a breach with Labour. Barnes would probably resign if home rule was formally abnegated; Labour might then become restive in parliament. An Irish bill, though, was out of the question, for it would meet contemptuous obstruction from the Nationalists at Westminster, who would feel obliged to object to Ulster's exclusion, scornful dismissal from Sinn Fein in Ireland,

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[1]Guest to Lloyd George, 3 May 1918, L.G.P., F/21/2/20; D.G. Boyce, 'British Conservative Opinion, the Ulster Question and the Partition of Ireland, 1912-21', Irish Historical Studies 17 (1970), p. 96.

[2]Quoted ibid.

and possible opposition from Irish Unionists, both north and south. Long grasped at federalism largely as a means, or so he thought, by which moderate nationalist demands might be assuaged, parliament controlled and Irish conscription facilitated. A federal plan for the whole of the United Kingdom would pacify Labour, erode the support given to Irish MPs who refused to accept it as a major concession, and rally a large number of English MPs.[1]

This is not to say that Long's open conversion to federalism was divorced from the ideology of a united, self-sufficient Empire. Nor was it unconnected with pressure exerted in the spring of 1918 by Tory Federalists, men like Chamberlain, Amery and F.S. Oliver.[2] But Long certainly clutched at federalism as a means to extricate the government from an immediate problem: he saw federalism as the only way to pass a measure of home rule which Ulster might be persuaded to endorse and the more moderate nationalists bullied to accept. Federalism was a kind of disguise behind which Long's form of home rule would masquerade as acceptable to everyone. To cloak home rule in the guise of federalism was somehow to take the sting out of the whole concept of Irish autonomy. For a while in 1918, federalism offered the

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[1]For a very full account of Long's reasons for espousing federalism see his copy letter to Lord Derby, 28 June 1918, W.L.P., WRO 947/547.

[2]See ibid., WRO 947/207 and 322 for Long's correspondence with Professor Dicey and F.S. Oliver regarding federalism in 1918; see also a 'Note on Federal Decentralisation', 26 Apr. 1918, by Oliver, ibid., WRO 947/413f.

illusion, if not the substance, of compromise.

Anxious not to give an impression of having abandoned home rule, Lloyd George tried to ignore Long's insistence on a federal solution. Indeed, he reacted to Long's report of 9 May - that a bill must be temporarily delayed - by offering a considerable extension of Long's powers. Accordingly, on 10 May Long was authorised to act on behalf of the cabinet in all Irish matters. This gave Long a very free hand, with precisely the kind of authority he had sought earlier in the year. He could personally decide what the cabinet should or should not discuss in relation to Ireland; he had an influential voice in the formulation of Irish policy at Westminster; he could oversee the policies of the new Lord Lieutenant, Lord French, and Edward Shortt without moving to Dublin Castle; and he had sole jurisdiction over the framing and timing of an Irish bill.

Long took immediate steps to ensure that he would be consulted in all matters relating to the actual policies carried out in Ireland. On the 13th he obtained the necessary assurances from Lord French. 'You may rest assured', French promised, 'that questions of Policy and Appointment will always be submitted to you.'[1] As French was willing to follow a tough policy of law enforcement and to defer to Long in matters of policy, the two men worked well together. When, later in the year, French

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[1]French to Long, 13 May 1918, ibid., WRO 947/229.

experienced difficulties with Shortt, difficulties which brought him to the brink of resignation, Long abruptly changed his earlier views on the respective positions of the Lord Lieutenant and Chief Secretary. As Chief Secretary in 1905, Long had forcefully asserted the supremacy of his own office, but in 1918 he backed French. At the end of August he told the prime minister that 'Shortt has done well, but ... he and Campbell [the Lord Chancellor] talk too much Home Rule and too little Conscription ... if necessary I shall ask you to let me caution both these officials.'[1] The complete concurrence expressed in Lloyd George's reply[2] indicates both the responsibility and independence of action which Long had assumed in Irish affairs. French intended to ask the prime minister for a precise definition of his powers. Long prevented this, telling French to inform Shortt that he, French, was the effective head of the Irish administration. 'You are', Long wrote, 'de jure and de facto Governor of Ireland - in other words you are in the position previously occupied on some occasions by the Lord Lieutenant who was a member of the Cabinet when the Chief Secretary was not.'[3] Long took this step on his own initiative: he was clearly backing the man, not the office.[4] When he

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[1] Long to Lloyd George, 30 Aug. 1918, ibid., WRO 947/569.

[2] Lloyd George to Long, 30 Aug. 1918, ibid.

[3] Long to French, 15 Oct. 1918, ibid., WRO 947/231.

[4] Two years later, with a different Chief Secretary now in office, Long changed his view again, this time instructing French that 'the Chief Sec., being in the House of Commons, ... must be regarded as the responsible Minister.' Long to French, 6 July 1920, ibid., WRO 947/232.

moved to the Admiralty in January 1919, Long continued to represent the Irish government in cabinet, heartily endorsed by Lord French.[1]

From May 1918 onwards Long came under increasing pressure to drop home rule altogether. John Walsh of the Irish Unionist Alliance wrote to remind him that Southern Unionists expected him 'to champion their cause, as you have so fearlessly done in the past, and for which you have earned their lasting gratitude';[2] and a group of nineteen peers, led by Salisbury and Londonderry, forwarded an address on 17 May demanding an abandonment of home rule.[3] His old friend J.M. Wilson put the Southern Unionists' position bluntly: 'if and when a Federal scheme for the whole of the U. Kingdom be proposed, we could not really oppose it, but, short of that we are for the Union and nothing else.' A number of Ulstermen turned against Long,[4] so much so that he felt obliged to offer his resignation to the Ulster Unionist Council, although this was refused.[5] At the same time, Lloyd George

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[1]See French to Lloyd George, copy, 14 Jan. 1919, ibid., WRO 947/229.

[2]Walsh to Long, 14 May 1918, ibid., WRO 947/382.

[3]See ibid., WRO 947/341; A.C.P., AC 31/1/11. The nineteen peers, almost a roll-call of 'diehard' Unionism, were as follows: Barrymore, Bedford, Beresford, Buccleuch, Churchill, Colville, Desborough, Forester, Halsbury, Harewood, Jersey, Londonderry, Northumberland, Plymouth, Salisbury, Saltoun, Somerset, Sydenham, and Willoughby de Broke.

[4]For example, James Barr of County Down wrote: 'I am disgusted with this Home Rule Bill.... I hope you are not going to have another Curragh.... Be a staunch Unionist, not a Home Ruler.' Barr to Long, n.d., but Long's reply is dated 5 May 1918, W.L.P., WRO 947/149.

[5]See ibid., WRO 947/153.

pressed him to produce an early bill; Long responded by demanding a free hand for the Irish government to suppress disorder. Only then, he insisted, would he agree to home rule.[1]

The government seemed to be drifting inexorably towards the policy of repression which was to hold sway until the treaty negotiations of 1921, a policy which has been described by a distinguished historian of this period as 'a monument to ignorance, racial and religious prejudice, and ineptitude.'[2] That the government initially decided in favour of a tough policy had much to do with Long's influence. In a cabinet memorandum of 1 June 1918 Long argued that the Irish administration, with Lord French acting as military overlord, should be given a more or less free hand in dealing with Sinn Fein extremists:

> It is a fact ... that it would be easier to enforce Conscription than to carry Home Rule. The former could be done ... at considerable cost of life and with very questionable results as regards recruits, but the latter is for the time being absolutely impossible.
>
> I venture to express the earnest hope that the Government will not enquire in too much detail into the action of the Irish Government.... I have willingly undertaken the difficult and laborious task of acting as the representative of the Cabinet ... but if every act ... is to be discussed and debated ... I fear the

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[1]See Long to Lloyd George, 14 May, 20 May, and 29 May 1918, L.G.P., F/32/5/41, 42 and 44 respectively.

[2]Kenneth O. Morgan, Consensus and Disunity: The Lloyd George Coalition Government, 1918-1922 (Oxford, 1979), p. 132.

wheels of the machine will be badly clogged.... I am extremely hopeful.... But everything depends upon the support given to the Irish Government and their freedom from undue criticism.[1]

The cabinet committee on Ireland met again at the Colonial Office on 4 June. By now there were considerable differences as to procedure. Long proposed to recommend to the cabinet that the committee be wound up and the bill officially dropped, but Christopher Addison objected strongly and argued that for the government to drop home rule only a few weeks after pledging itself to bring forward new proposals would be discreditable. Addison later described Long's policy as 'half-hearted', with Lloyd George 'heading the drifters'.[2] He failed to realise that Lloyd George could go no faster on home rule than his Tory colleagues would allow and mistakenly concluded that Long's dominant influence was 'a triumph of obstruction for those who ... never seriously intended to get on with the business.'[3] Yet, as Thomas Jones recorded on 6 June, Long still hoped that a federal bill might be feasible later in the year.[4]

On Monday 10 June the committee considered a memorandum by Long which, as chairman, he proposed should form the basis of its report. As far as was possible, the

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[1]Cabinet memorandum by Long, 1 June 1918, A.C.P., AC 31/1/15.

[2]Addison, Politics from Within, 2, 243-6.

[3]Idem, Four and a Half Years, 2, 537.

[4]Jones, Whitehall Diary: Ireland, 1918-25, pp. 10-11.

memorandum was altered to suit conflicting views - it was for this reason that the report was so ambiguous in its recommendations. Addison, predictably, was far from satisfied, regarding the outcome as 'a piece of disastrous folly.'[1] He rather naively believed that all Lloyd George had to do was put his foot down firmly in favour of an immediate bill and Long would jump into line. In Addison's view, the prime minister was 'timid to the last degree in his dealings with the Tory party.'[2] This insensitivity to Conservative feelings was in 1921 to cost Addison his place in the cabinet. Addison's remarks make it clear that the proceedings of the committee were considerably less harmonious than the official records would allow.

Four days later the committee produced its report, a hotchpotch of the members' conflicting views: it described an Ireland in which any immediate grant of home rule would be folly; it condemned the 'dual policy' of home rule in return for conscription; and it asserted the willingness of the committee to proceed with a bill if so instructed.[3] Long also produced a draft Federal Bill for the whole of the United Kingdom, although this was well beyond his remit. He proposed local parliaments for England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales empowered 'to make laws for the peace, order and good government of

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[1] Addison, Four and a Half Years, 2, 541.

[2] Ibid., p. 552.

[3] Interim Report of the Committee on the Government of Ireland Amendment Bill, 14 June 1918, P.R.O., G.T. 4839, CAB 27/46.

the country ...'[1] The chief interest of this draft bill lies in its evidence of Long's radical disposition to change the constitution almost beyond recognition: in well under a decade Long had moved from total agreement with A.V. Dicey on the sanctity of the constitution to advocacy of four national parliaments with an imperial House of Commons reduced to only three hundred and fifty members.[2] Lloyd George would have nothing to do with the plan, although it received the strongest possible support from Austen Chamberlain, who produced a cabinet memorandum insisting that 'the attempt to solve the Irish question in isolation has always failed and is doomed to failure.'[3]

The cabinet considered Long's report on 19 June. When Long pointed out that the government had rather foolishly pledged itself to resign if it failed to carry home rule as promised, Lloyd George prevaricated by contending that the activities of Sinn Fein cancelled any earlier promises, making any grant of home rule impossible. George Barnes came up with a happy 'via media': Lloyd George and Long were quite correct, home rule was out of the question for the moment, but the government should nevertheless be ready with a measure when circumstances permitted. A bill should be worked out but put into cold storage. Long was therefore instructed to produce an Irish bill in the full knowledge that the cabinet would not take it up. Chamberlain

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[1]'Draft of a Bill for a federal system for the United Kingdom, prepared by Mr. Walter Long's Committee, June 1918', P.R.O., G.T. 8239, CAB 24/89.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Cabinet memorandum by Chamberlain, 17 June 1918, A.C.P., AC 31/1/2.

made a last appeal on behalf of federalism, but, as he well knew, federalism was a non-starter.[1] As Long explained to Lord Derby, recently despatched to Paris as British Ambassasor, later that day: 'The country is in a condition which calls for drastic measures, and which makes it impossible to contemplate ... any bill for a reform of the constitution.'[2]

Even so, Long continued to toy with federalism throughout the summer and autumn of 1918, declaring to Lloyd George on 20 July that 'you can't conscript without some form of H.R. The old kind is dead as Queen Anne, Federalism is only substitute.'[3] In cabinet four days later Lloyd George renounced the 'dual policy' and countered Long's observation - voiced in the hope that the prime minister would feel obliged to give the go ahead to a provisional federal scheme - that the government had promised to proceed with home rule or resign by asserting that conscription would, if militarily necessary, be imposed by force on Ireland, all promises to the contrary notwithstanding.[4]

The Irish committee met again at the Colonial Office on Tuesday 6 August and agreed, as an alternative to Long's federal bill, to consider resurrecting the bill drawn up in 1917 by Curzon, Duke and Addison. A draft

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[1]Cabinet minutes, 19 June 1918, P.R.O., WC 433, CAB 23/6.
[2]Long to Derby, copy, 19 June 1918, W.L.P., WRO 947/547.
[3]Long to Lloyd George, 20 July 1918, L.G.P., F/33/1/11.
[4]Cabinet minutes, 29 July 1918, P.R.O., WC 453, CAB 23/7.

Irish bill was thus hastily prepared in August, more as a sop to Christopher Addison and the government's critics than as a serious effort to bring home rule forward. The bill proposed exclusion for a six county Ulster, subject to a plebiscite at the end of the war and a confirmatory referendum again seven years later.[1] More significant, however, was a proposal to establish a Council for the whole of Ireland. Already, then, Long's committee had foreshadowed the basic outlines of the settlement which was to be embodied in the Government of Ireland Act more than two years later. As Long expected, the cabinet did not choose to take up the bill. Home rule was dead, at least for the time being.

Christopher Addison harboured a deep resentment against Long after the failure of home rule in 1918 and became a bitter critic of his role in the government and the influence which his position in the Conservative party afforded. Addison quite wrongly held Long personally responsible for the failure to settle Ireland, regarding him henceforth as 'actively reactionary'.[2] In fact, the reasons for the failure of the 1918 Irish committee are considerably more complex. To begin with, Long believed that an Irish bill on its own could not work, even attempting in September to have United Kingdom federalism included in the election manifesto, and encouraging Milner

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[1] 'Draft of a Bill for the Government of Ireland, prepared by Mr. Walter Long's Committee, August 1918', P.R.O., G.T. 8240, CAB 24/89.

[2] For Addison's highly critical remarks about Long's usefulness see Four and a Half Years, 2, 553, 565 and 597.

to put pressure on the prime minister from within the war cabinet.[1] He did not accept Professor Dicey's argument that Irishmen were 'pre-eminently unsuited for taking part in a federal system.'[2] Rather, he was reluctant to proceed with home rule in the hope that delay would provide an opportunity for the government to produce a single grand design with which to cement the bonds of Empire, provide a framework for dealing with all domestic and imperial questions, and solve the intractable Irish problem.

By the autumn Long realised that a federal scheme would have to include provision for Irish partition, and this he regarded as impractical in the prevailing climate of intimidation and violence. To Lord Reading Long confirmed in October that

> if any scheme is to be produced it must be based upon partition lines. Is it worth while to produce anything of the kind? It would be violently resisted in Ireland by Nationalists generally. It would be equally strongly opposed by Unionists outside of Ulster ...[3]

He was determined that dominion home rule could not be conceded because Ireland 'is too near to us, and occupies a position of far too great importance in regard to defence, to make it possible for us to allow her what is in reality absolute independence.'[4] Therefore, Long maintained, the

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[1]See Long to Milner, copy, 8 Sept. 1918, W.L.P., WRO 947/574.

[2]Dicey to Long, 22 Nov. 1918, ibid., WRO 947/207.

[3]Long to Reading, copy, 24 Oct. 1918, ibid., WRO 947/330.

[4]Long to Father John Flattery of County Mayo, copy, 12 Sept. 1918, ibid., WRO 947/224.

men of violence in Ireland must first be rooted out, then home rule would become feasible.

Long had high hopes in 1918 that the policy of repression first, concession later, would succeed, reporting to Austen Chamberlain on 20 September that 'French is Master and his policy prevails ... the malcontents are coming to heel.'[1] He mistakenly believed that a new moderate party in Ireland could defeat Sinn Fein.[2] Southern Unionists, he hoped, could be persuaded to unite with moderate Nationalists to form what Long called a Federal party. This hoped-for alliance would run candidates in every seat outside Ulster, stepping into the breach between the Nationalist party at Westminster and Sinn Fein.[3] By conferring real powers of self-government at the eleventh hour, Long anticipated that the moderates might make a comeback. Ireland would abandon hopes of a republic and the mass of the people would turn away from Sinn Fein.[4]

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[1]Long to Chamberlain, 20 Sept. 1918, A.C.P., AC 31/1/24.

[2]In common with most other English politicians of the period, Long used the term 'Sinn Fein' to denounce the republican 'murder gang' in Ireland. In many of his statements and much of his correspondence from January 1919 onwards, 'Sinn Fein', 'murder' and 'outrage' are used as synonyms. It should be remembered that over seventy Irish MPs called themselves Sinn Fein, yet those nationalists prepared to murder and destroy always remained a small proportion of the population. Long's use of the term 'Sinn Fein' must be treated with caution: he invariably meant Irish murderers and rebels. He did not mean the Sinn Fein party which, after 1918, legitimately represented the great majority of Irishmen outside Ulster.

[3]For Long's ideas concerning a new Irish party see his letter, asking for a contribution towards getting the new alliance started, to Viscount Lascelles, 4 Oct. 1918, W.L.P., WRO 947/269.

[4]An Irish Centre party was, in fact, formed in January 1919 to promote autonomy for Ireland within the Empire through an all Ireland parliament, with provincial parliaments for local

But he never really grasped the deep psychological and emotional appeal which Sinn Fein was able to exercise in Ireland. He was simply being over-optimistic. In a sense Long was still living in the days of 'bloody' Balfour: he still believed in a judicious compound of coercion and concession. Home rule could no longer be killed by kindness, but Sinn Fein might be.

That Christopher Addison was wrong to suspect Long of never seriously intending home rule in 1918 is indicated by a proposal which Long put to the prime minister on 22 November. Recognising that many months must elapse before an Irish bill could be passed in the knowledge that there would be no recrudescence of crime, Long proposed an interim measure, arguing that it was very dangerous for the government to be seen to be doing nothing. With the full approval of the Irish administration, Long recommended that a short bill be introduced giving statutory powers to an Executive Council of representative Irishmen appointed by the Lord Lieutenant.[1] This Council would become a kind of cabinet-in-waiting for Ireland, the nucleus, Long hoped, of a new, constitutional Irish Nationalist party. In the short term it would serve to

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affairs. The party's general committee was chaired by Captain Stephen Gwynne and included General Sir Hubert Gough. The party played only the most peripheral role in the unfolding of Anglo-Irish politics. Early 1919 also saw a definite breach in the Irish Unionist Alliance, with the formation of a breakaway group calling itself the Unionist Anti-Partition League.

[1]Memorandum by Long, 22 Nov. 1918, L.G.P., F/33/1/35.

militate against the critics who accused the government of having no policy except the old one of repression. Perhaps unwisely, Lloyd George took the idea no further.

The Sinn Fein triumph in the general election of December 1918 merely confirmed the fact that nationalist Ireland would no longer settle for the kind of home rule for which it had campaigned for nearly four decades. Ironically, almost at the very moment that Long and other leading Unionists reconciled themselves to working constructively towards home rule, Ireland turned against it. By the end of the year the battle lines were drawn up: Who was to govern Ireland? - Dublin Castle or Sinn Fein? On the last day of the year Long succinctly defined the problem for the cabinet. The Sinn Fein hardliners, he wrote,

> ... are brave and fanatical and do not fear imprisonment or death; they are not to be influenced by private negotiations with Bishops or Priests, or captured by getting the patronage of appointments.... Neither do they care a straw for the press.
>
> It is a fair and square fight between the Irish Government and Sinn Fein as to who is going to govern the country.[1]

From the autumn of 1918 until late in 1919 home rule was dead as a practical political issue, and Long concerned

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[1]Memorandum by Long, 31 Dec. 1918, P.R.O., G.T. 6574, CAB 24/72.

himself with the administration in Ireland and the means by which violence might be stamped out. In a climate of worsening violence there could be no question of concession, a view to which Lloyd George adhered with equal rigidity. With the murder of two policemen, the first R.I.C. fatalities since the Easter Rising, and the capture of a wagonload of explosive at Soloheadbeg, County Tipperary, on 21 January 1919, Sinn Fein gave notice that the old idea of 'physical force' rebellion had not been abandoned.

By the early summer of 1919 Long had little confidence that the R.I.C., the Dublin Metropolitan Police or the Special Crimes Branch at Dublin Castle could deal effectively with the situation, and he gave his full backing to Lord French in pressing for reorganisation of the security forces. On a visit to Ireland in May Long was appalled to find that merely to travel down to the Curragh races he was obliged to take an escort of five armed detectives and a car loaded with soldiers. These conditions, he reported to the prime minister, were 'the result of bad work in the Castle itself.... I firmly believe that this unfortuante state of things ... has grown up owing to the weakness and inefficiency of some ... officials ...'[1] He pushed throughout the year for strong measures and lent his full weight to the policy of repression which the Lord Lieutenant followed and which has so blackened Anglo-Irish

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[1]Long to Lloyd George, copy, 21 May 1919, W.L.P., WRO 947/292.

history in this period. Especially significant for the future development of policy was Long's proposal, first mooted in May 1919, that the strength and efficiency of the R.I.C. be improved by the recruitment of ex-servicemen.[1] Ruthless men, he contended, could be countered only by ruthless policies, and by September he was prepared to recommend that Ireland be governed as a Crown Colony until such time as home rule became feasible.[2]

Concerned lest his government appear to have no policy other than repression, Lloyd George appointed another Irish committee, again under Long's chairmanship, on 7 October 1919, thus bouncing the home rule ball back into the political court.[3] This body was charged with monitoring the Irish problem and recommending a long term solution, and it was this body which was ultimately to be responsible for the Government of Ireland Act. The committee first met a week later; it worked hard and fast,

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[1]Charles Townshend, The British Campaign in Ireland, 1919-21 (Oxford, 1975), p. 25. Dr Townshend has shown that the notorious 'Black and Tans' were first recruited at the end of 1919, from which time recruiting offices were set up in Britain, and not in the summer of 1920 as is commonly thought (Ibid., pp. 45-6; Appendix I, p. 209).

[2]Memorandum by Long, 12 Sept. 1919, W.L.P, WRO 947/293.

[3]The terms under which Asquith's Home Rule Bill had been placed on the statute book in September 1914 and then suspende for the duration of the war meant that it would automatically come into force as soon as the last of the peace treaties was signed. With the most important of the peace treaties - the Treaty of Versailles, signed on 28 June 1919 - now out of the way, Lloyd George naturally felt obliged to do something about Ireland. The government effectively had only three options: to pass an Amending Bill to exclude Ulster and then to let Asquith's Act come into operation; to repeal the 1914 Act; or to pass a new measure which would supersede Asquith's Act. Lloyd George chose the latter course.

meeting for two hours on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday of each week.[1] Partition was clearly the only way forward, and on 15 October the committee agreed to separate parliaments for North and South and a Common Council 'with certain powers for the whole of Ireland. Such a scheme not to be inconsistent with a Federal system of Government for the United Kingdom.'[2]

A few days later the committee had three working schemes under consideration. The first entailed one parliament for the whole of Ireland with county option to protect Ulster, those counties opting out to continue to be governed by Westminster; the second likewise contemplated one parliament for the whole of Ireland but with an Ulster Committee to be granted both legislative and administrative veto powers; and the third scheme envisaged separate parliaments for North and South, with a federal council enjoying power over the whole of Ireland only at the delegation of the two parliaments. The third scheme, then, avoided the onerous task of defining exactly what powers any all Ireland parliament might exercise. Instead, it conceded the possibility of one governing body but left the role of such a body for the Irish to decide. The council was intended only as a symbol of an Irish unity

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[1]The committee comprised the following: Long (chairman), H.A.L. Fisher, Lord Birkenhead (F.E. Smith), Shortt, Worthington-Evans, Geddes, G.H. Roberts, F.G. Kellaway, Sir Gordon Hewart and Sir Robert Horne. Lord French and MacPherson were 'ex officio' members. Philip Kerr and Captain L.F. Burgis acted as secretaries.

[2]Conclusions of committee meeting, 15 Oct. 1919, P.R.O., C.I. 2nd Cons., CAB 27/68.

which did not exist. The third scheme was politically expedient. Of the three it was the only one with the slightest chance of proving workable.[1]

Long's first report was ready by 4 November. The committee agreed unanimously that a fresh legislative attempt should be made to deal with the Irish problem once and for all and it decided firmly in favour of the third option. The general outline of the Government of Ireland Bill was thus already clear: there would be two parliaments and a council to promote ultimate unification. This was an adroit proposal: it was consistent with government pledges not to hand Ulster over to the South; it allowed the withdrawal of British rule from the whole of Ireland; and it theoretically satisfied the demands of nationalist Ireland for self-government. The committee also pointed out that a two parliament solution was by far the least contentious method of achieving partition, for the nationalists could not claim that any part of Ireland remained under British domination. 'No nationalists would be retained under British rule. All Irishmen would be self-governing.'[2]

On the same day that Long's committee presented its report, 4 November, Long's Irish policy was bitterly censured by the Morning Post, and his willingness to work towards, indeed to take the initiative over, an Irish bill

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[1]Government of Ireland Alternative Schemes A, B, and C, 20 Oct. 1919, P.R.O., C.I. 12, CAB 27/69.

[2]Report of Irish Committee, 4 Nov. 1919, P.R.O., C.P. 56, CAB 27/68.

provoked considerable disquiet amongst many of his oldest friends and political allies. Long's advocacy of an early bill was based on the view that Sinn Fein could be suppressed before any form of Irish autonomy came into effect. Meanwhile, he offered the most unswerving support to Lord French and was the government's most powerful spokesman for the employment of ruthless policies against the republican insurgents. To the Lord Lieutenant Long wrote at the end of the year:

> These vile criminals must be exterminated.... I observe that M. de Valera styles himself the President of the Irish Republic.... In my opinion, he should be regarded as a rebel ... the Government of the United Kingdom will resist - by force of arms if necessary, any attempt to establish a Republic in Ireland.[1]

Long fully expected the destruction of Sinn Fein before his bill passed into law; stern measures in Ireland would be wedded to practical concession at Westminster.

It was an act of deliberate political policy that repression in Ireland, often carried out with sanguinary ferocity by the British security forces, should feature as a backcloth to the grant of home rule contained in the Government of Ireland Act. Long's bill was not conceived as a hasty concession to terrorism. It was brought forward in the belief, ultimately mistaken, that home rule could be turned against Sinn Fein. As Long put it to Lloyd George

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[1]Long to French, copy, 26 Dec. 1919, L.P., Add. MS. 62424.

in June 1920:

> If we steadfastly adhere to the ... double-barrelled policy of firm and effective dealing with the Sinn Feiners, murderers, and other scoundrels, and at the same time pursue our policy of reform by passing our measure through Parliament with as little delay as possible ... I am satisfied that we shall win through.[1]

If necessary, Ireland must be treated as a war zone and the most drastic measures employed, for Long always regarded destruction of Sinn Fein as the pre-requisite of a successful bill. 'I do not believe', he wrote to Lord French, 'that we shall defeat S.F. until we take up the challenge which they have thrown down, and go to war with them in earnest.'[2]

The cabinet considered the Irish committee's report on

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[1]Long to Lloyd George, copy, 18 June 1920, W.L.P., WRO 947/240.

[2]Long to French, copy, 2 July 1920, ibid., WRO 947/232. The level of violence with which the Irish government had to deal can be gleaned from the following official statistics: Between 1 Jan. 1919 and 31 Dec. 1919, 17 policemen were killed. The following year saw a marked increase in violence. Between 1 Jan. 1920 and 31 Dec. 1920, 165 policemen were killed. In the two years commencing 1 Jan 1919, 182 policemen were killed and 265 wounded, 50 military were killed and 122 wounded, and 39 civilians were killed and 108 wounded. Figures relating to destruction of Crown property paint an equally grim picture: Between 1 Jan. 1919 and 19 Feb. 1921, 536 police barracks and 70 courthouses were destroyed. A further 212 police barracks were attacked and damaged, and there were 3,052 raids for arms. On top of this, republican terrorists encouraged and pursued a persistent policy of arson against private property, land-grabbing and cattle stealing. Loyalists naturally suffered the brunt of these attacks. These figures can be found in Irish Crime Statistics Cmd. 709 (1920) and Outrages (Ireland) Cmd. 1165 (1921). They are also available in Buckland, Irish Unionism: The Anglo-Irish and the New Ireland, pp. 201-2, together with a representative list of outrages perpetrated against Southern Unionists.

11 November 1919. Rather than have the government embark on a contentious bill, Lloyd George drew back, suggesting that a series of resolutions be laid before parliament for discussion. Lloyd George wanted to test the mood of the House, particularly of the Tory party, before proceeding. Two days later, however, the committee rejected this proposal, insisting unanimously that it must be a bill or nothing,[1] and by the 17th the committee had produced a second report emphasising the necessity of an early bill.[2] A third report, dealing with the financial aspects of the proposed bill, was presented to the cabinet a week later,[3] and a fourth and last report was presented on 2 December. This last report recommended the transfer of extensive powers to the two Irish parliaments and laid down a schedule to put the plan into effect.[4]

Once it had been decided to establish a separate parliament in Ulster the old question of 1914 raised its head - what, precisely, was to be the geographical area excluded? Long pointed out that if eventual reunification was to be the goal a nine county historic province of Ulster ought to be excluded, and on 10 December the cabinet decided provisionally in favour of such an arrangement.[5] The Ulster Unionists objected vociferously

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[1]Minutes of committee meeting, 13 Nov. 1919, P.R.O., C.I. 9th Minutes, CAB 27/68.

[2]Second report of Irish committee, 17 Nov. 1919, P.R.O., C.P. 137, CAB 27/68.

[3]Third report of Irish committee, 24 Nov. 1919, P.R.O., C.P. 190, CAB 27/68.

[4]Fourth report of Irish committee, 2 Dec. 1919, P.R.O., C.P. 247, CAB 27/68.

[5]Cabinet conclusions, 10 Dec. 1919, P.R.O., CAB 23/18.

so that, just five days later, the cabinet was informed that the Ulster leaders were of the opinion that a Northern parliament would be unworkable if it was to govern three counties with a clear nationalist majority.[1] Already, then, the Ulster leaders were implicitly committed to a viable Northern state, prepared to surrender historic Ulster rather than give credence to the possibility of a united Ireland at some future date.

Long took great care in planning the introduction of the bill to ensure that it received the minimum amount of criticism. Sensing that the critics would seize upon particular details which were easy to attack, he was careful to make the measure as watertight as possible. Much of the actual drafting was done by H.A.L. Fisher and Philip Kerr, with Long keeping a watchful eye on the bill's progress. Lloyd George originally intended that the bill be presented to parliament before the Christmas recess, but to this Long would not agree. He wanted to have the final draft examined by a number of people who had not served on the cabinet committee but who were nonetheless thoroughly conversant with the Irish problem.[2] This was done in great secrecy so as to ensure that the terms of the settlement would not leak out before the government was ready. Long spent the Christmas break going over the

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[1] Cabinet conclusions, 15 Dec. 1919, P.R.O., CAB 23/18.

[2] Realising that these tactics would carry more weight if recommended by the Chief Secretary, Long enlisted MacPherson's help. See Long to MacPherson, 12 Dec. 1919, W.L.P., WRO 947/211.

measure with a fine toothcomb to eradicate any weak clauses, intending to have a final version ready for the new session.

Press reaction to the government's proposals, both in Ulster and the South, was mostly hostile,[1] but Long had expected as much and took comfort from the fact that there had been no nationalist outburst or attack in Ireland in response to the government's announced intentions.[2] Early in the New Year Long visited the North to confer with the Ulster leaders, reporting to Lloyd George on his return that 'the inclusion of Donegal, Cavan and Monaghan would provide such an access of strength to the Roman Catholic party, that the supremacy of the Unionists would be seriously threatened.'[3] He was not prepared to force a settlement which put the Ulstermen at risk, and although by February 1920 the bill had been fully revised and re-drafted the Ulster problem had still not been dealt with. Long therefore asked the cabinet for a decision as to the precise jurisdiction of the Northern parliament; it also remained to be decided whether Ireland should continue to be represented in the cabinet by a Chief Secretary.[4]

These problems were thrashed out at a committee meeting held on 17 February, with Bonar Law taking the chair.

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[1]For a study of the press and public reaction to the government's Irish policy see D.G. Boyce, Englishmen and Irish Troubles, British Public Opinion and the Making of Irish Policy, 1918-22 (London, 1972).

[2]Memorandum by Long, 1 Jan. 1920, P.R.O., C.I. 46, CAB 27/69.

[3]Memorandum by Long, 3 Feb. 1920, L.G.P., F/34/1/6.

[4]Report by Long, 5 Feb. 1920, P.R.O., C.P. 565, CAB 27/68.

Despite Long's recognition of the Ulstermen's case for six county exclusion the committee decided to recommend the nine county option. To exclude the historic province of Ulster, it declared, would lead to the ultimate unification of Ireland, whereas a six county Ulster with a deliberately tailored Unionist majority would be permanently divisive. Here, then, was a major concession to the fiction of Irish unity: a majority of the committee, though not its chairman, was of the opinion that unification must be the long-term goal. Partition must be a temporary expedient only.[1]

The Ulster leaders now began to work determinedly against the bill, in particular they refused to countenance an all Ireland judiciary. Long was ready to put his bill before the cabinet for final approval when he learnt, as a result of an interview between MacPherson and the Ulster MPs on 18 February, that Ulster would do everything in her power to wreck the bill unless granted a separate judiciary. A meeting at the House of Commons on the following day considered the question and on the 20th Long informed Bonar Law that the bill would have to be re-drafted to take account of Ulster's conditions, so that there was no chance of its being ready for the cabinet as promised.[2]

Despite the conclusions of the Irish committee the Ulster

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[1]Report by Bonar Law, 17 Feb. 1920, P.R.O., Supplement to C.I. 15th Minutes, CAB 27/68.

[2]See Long to Bonar Law, letter and memorandum entitled 'The Irish Bill', 20 Feb. 1920, B.L.P., 98/7/11.

Unionists got their way. Anxious to have the Ulster leaders' support for the bill, the cabinet preferred to back down. The price of Ulster's support was the six counties; the Ulstermen wanted only what they could control.[1] On 24 February the cabinet decided to ignore

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[1]It would appear that Long informed Lloyd George that Ulster's support could only be bought by a pledge guaranteeing that the boundaries of the six counties would remain virtually untouched, excepting very slight adjustments which might prove desirable. Long was then authorised to make a secret pledge to this effect to the Ulster leaders. As is well known, the idea of a Boundary Commission was used by Lloyd George in December 1921 as a tactical manoeuvre to persuade the Irish representatives to arrive at a settlement. The Irish later claimed to have agreed to the Treaty in the belief that Ulster's area would be so reduced as to make her separate existence impossible, so that a united Ireland would result in a few years. The pledge to the Ulster leaders in 1920 meant that Lloyd George's hands were tied when in the following year he came to negotiate the Anglo-Irish Treaty with Michael Collins. Worried in 1924 that the Labour government might unwittingly renege on this guarantee, Long confirmed to Lord Londonderry that 'it was on this distinct pledge that we were able to pass the Bill with the aid of the Ulstermen; they did not care for it and they did not want it.' (Long to Londonderry, copy, 26 Aug. 1924, W.L.P, WRO 947/290). Eight days before he died Long told Lord Selborne the story of how he had secretly bargained, with Lloyd George's full blessing, with Carson and Craig to win Ulster's support for the Government of Ireland Bill (see memorandum and covering letter by Long to Selborne, 18 Sept. 1924, ibid., WRO 947/352). When Long died on 26 September 1924 Selborne made the story public, a dramatic disclosure in view of the fact that parliament was shortly to meet to deal with the question of Ulster's boundaries. On 1 October Lloyd George, with characteristic mendacity, issued a denial in the Commons, alleging that Long's memory must have been at fault and stating categorically that there had been no boundary pledge to Ulster in 1920 (see 177 H.C. Deb. ser.5 col. 189). Long's story, however, rings true. The newspapers had a field day with stories about Long's 'voice from the grave', and Selborne's revelation proved a serious embarrassment to the government. On 2 October 1924 the Irish Free State Bill passed the Commons.

the committee's official recommendation and listen instead to Long's advice: the bill should grant one parliament in Dublin to administer twenty-six counties and one parliament in Belfast to administer the remaining six.[1] With this surrender to the Ulster Unionists' capacity for disruption the cabinet turned its back on a united Ireland and effectively ensured that partition would be permanent. On the following day the bill received its first reading in the Commons[2] and two weeks later, on 10 March, the Ulster Unionist Council decided officially to offer no opposition.

The situation in Ireland, meanwhile, continued to deteriorate. The Irish government had 'since the beginning of 1919 been dominated by a Unionist clique as incompetent as it was extreme. They were successful only in one respect, squeezing Catholics, who had become objects of suspicion, out of positions of power.'[3] General Byrne, whom Long regarded as a Sinn Fein fellow-traveller who had 'lost his nerve', was eased out of his post as head of the R.I.C. and James MacMahon, the Roman Catholic under-secretary, kept his job only by keeping quiet.[4] E.A. Saunderson, until August 1920 principal private secretary to Lord French, referred to Catholic officials as 'the dirty elements in Dublin Castle' and described

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[1]Cabinet conclusions, 24 Feb. 1920, P.R.O., CAB 23/20.

[2]125 H.C. Deb. ser.5 col. 1694.

[3]Eunan O'Halpin, 'Sir Warren Fisher and the Coalition, 1919-1922', Historical Journal 24 (1981), p. 920.

[4]Ibid.

relations within the administration as 'steady war'.[1] During the spring of 1920 General Macready, formerly Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, was placed in charge of the Irish forces, and Hamar Greenwood replaced Ian MacPherson as Chief Secretary, though Long recommended either Jack Sandars or William Bridgeman for the job.[2] Despite these changes Sir Warren Fisher, the permanent secretary to the Treasury, still reported in May that 'the Government of Ireland strikes one as almost woodenly stupid and quite devoid of any imagination. It listens solely to the ascendancy party and ... it never seemed to think of the utility of keeping in touch with opinions of all kinds.'[3] It was against this background that the government proceeded with home rule.[4]

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[1]See Saunderson to Long, 28 Jan. 1919, W.L.P., WRO 947/347. French later described Saunderson as 'prone to insolence' and 'the victim of extraordinary hallucinations', and, after an acrimonious incident between the two men at the end of July 1920, French dismissed the secretary. Saunderson subsequently begged Long to offer him a position assisting the Irish committee, but Long declined. See French to Long, 1 Aug. and 7 Aug. 1920; Long to French, 5 Aug. 1920, ibid., WRO 947/232.

[2]See Long to Bonar Law, 18 Mar. 1920, B.L.P., 88/8/13.

[3]Report on the Government of Ireland by Sir Warren Fisher, 15 May 1920, L.G.P., F/31/1/33. Fisher, it should be noted, was strongly biased in favour of the nationalist South and deprecated the government's use of force to restore order, so much so that he suggested in August 1920 that the Irish government be recalled to London and Dublin Castle abandoned. See Eunan O'Halpin, op. cit., p. 921.

[4]The government responded to Fisher's criticisms by instituting a number of reforms during the spring of 1920. In May a team of highly respected officials from British departments arrived in Dublin. The most significant new appointment was that of Sir John Anderson as joint under-secretary with James MacMahon, a Roman Catholic official who, though regarded as incompetent in many ways, the government decided to retain in order to appease the Catholic hierarchy. It was as part of these administrative reforms that J.J. Taylor was forced to retire. See John McColgan, British Policy and the Irish Administration, 1920-22 (London, 1983), pp. 4-21.

The Government of Ireland Bill received its second reading on 29, 30 and 31 March. It was carried by three hundred and forty-eight votes to ninety-four, and Lloyd George countered the government's critics by remarking that 'there is no Union with Ireland. A grappling hook is not Union.'[1] Long then proposed the setting up of a committee, composed of members selected from the Irish committee which had originally drafted the measure, to consider amendments. His proposal was adopted and, once again, Long took the chair himself.[2] He was also in charge in the Commons.

By May the government was looking for a way to postpone the bill, realising that the state of the country made its successful operation an impossibility. The difficulty was somehow to delay the bill without appearing to admit to the charge that there was no real intention of ever passing it, that the bill had all along been a ploy designed solely to undermine support for Sinn Fein. Long's frequent absences, owing to illness, during the summer and autumn of 1920 became a convenient excuse for the government to delay. Amendments, too, proved troublesome. Bonar Law and Long both envisaged amendments against partition, or against only a six county exclusion, or insisting on an all Ireland parliament. At this stage, the government was convinced that any intimation of an all Ireland parliament with real powers would provoke

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[1] 127 H.C. Deb. ser.5 col. 1335.

[2] See Long to Bonar Law, 8 Apr. 1920, B.L.P., 103/5/1.

determined opposition from the Ulster MPs, who had come to regard Long with increasing suspicion. On 6 May Bonar Law confided to Lloyd George: 'I wish it were possible to postpone the Irish Bill.'[1] Two days later Long assured Lord Derby that unless there was a marked improvement in the success of the security forces in Ireland 'the Bill will not be allowed to come into operation.[2]

At eleven o'clock on Saturday morning, 8 May 1920, a small committee met to discuss a number of amendments which had been proposed. Long was not due to return to London until Monday, recovering at Rood Ashton from rheumatic arthritis,[3] so Bonar Law took the chair in his absence. It was decided to reject the proposal for a senate common to both the Northern and Southern parliaments on the ground that such an amendment ran counter to 'the whole scheme of the Bill.'[4]

Long's work on the bill naturally placed him in a difficult position with regard to many of his old allies in the struggle against home rule. Accusations of caprice, betrayal and fecklessness abounded. For many years the self-appointed defender of the scattered Loyalist population of the South, he came in for much criticism. Lord Ashtown,

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[1]Bonar Law to Lloyd George, copy, 6 May 1920, ibid., 102/5/14.

[2]Long to Derby, copy, 8 May 1920, W.L.P., WRO 947/203.

[3]Long's poor health was exacerbated by a recent bereavement. In March 1920 his eldest daughter, Mrs. George Gibbs, died of influenza.

[4]Typescript of decisions arrived at regarding Government of Ireland Bill, 8 May 1920, B.L.P., 102/5/17.

for example, wrote bitterly:

> It is cruel to see the results of the betrayal of the Irish loyalists for the last 50 years. England will gain nothing by it.... The more liberty you give the people the worse they are. They simply use it to commit outrages.... Home Rule will only make matters worse. I can't understand you supporting it.[1]

Long could only reply, with his usual pragmatic resolve, that whilst it was easy to condemn partition 'nobody is apparently able to produce an alternative that will stand a moment's examination.'[2] His old friend J.M. Wilson objected to Hamar Greenwood as following 'in the footsteps of a long line of bloody fools ... whose whole object seems to have been to try and placate those who are implacable and to ruin England's friends here',[3] and many members of the Irish Unionist Alliance denigrated Long as traitor to a cause which had once been proud to have him as its parliamentary leader. A letter published in the Irish Times by W.M. Jellett, the Member for Dublin University, gave forceful expression to the outrage and fury with which many Southern Unionists greeted Long's 'breach of faith': 'We in the South and West', Jellett complained, 'must apparently be given a taste of the tyranny contemplated

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[1]Ashtown to Long, 30 July 1920, W.L.P, WRO 947/142. Ashtown had good reason to complain. Threatened by Sinn Fein ruffians he was unable to harvest his crops or farm his lands. Several attempts were made on his life, one by placing a bomb in his personal Church pew.

[2]Long to Ashtown, copy, 3 Aug. 1920, ibid.

[3]Wilson to Long, 27 Apr. 1920, ibid., WRO 947/392.

by Mr. Long before the Government are compelled to realise the madness ... of their proposals.'[1]

In October the I.U.A. sent a letter of protest to all members of the coalition. 'Should this Bill be passed', it asserted, 'we see nothing for Southern Ireland but a welter of confusion, ending either in surrender to the republican party or in despotic government as a Crown Colony.... Irish peace will never be achieved except on secure foundations ...'[2] Normally immune to political criticism, Long felt deeply these animadversions from some of his oldest and most respected Irish Unionist friends. His only comfort was that he had at least guaranteed the support of the Ulster leaders.[3]

The critics of the government were legion. In July a special Trades Union Congress passed a resolution demanding a single Irish parliament with full Dominion powers; Labour proposed an all Ireland assembly elected by proportional representation so as to protect minorities; and the Asquith Liberals clung to the old policy of county option.[4] Even The Times ran a series of leading articles in June and July highly critical of the government's proposals.[5] Perhaps surprisingly, the only group which was prepared to let Sinn Fein have a republic

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[1] Irish Times, 9 June 1920.

[2] Circular letter sent by the I.U.A. to Long, 28 Oct. 1920, W.L.P., WRO 947/383.

[3] See Long to Bonar Law, 21 June 1920, B.L.P., 163/5/6.

[4] Boyce, Englishmen and Irish Troubles, p. 111.

[5] Ibid., p. 119.

and full independence was a small section of the Conservative party - a view which was motivated by fierce detestation of the Irish and the belief that to throw Ireland out of the United Kingdom could only be of benefit to Britain.

Still, the government stuck to its guns. As Winston Churchill put it, in an article published on 13 June in the Illustrated Sunday Herald, the coalition intended to take 'every possible measure to break the murder campaign and to enforce the authority of the law, while at the same time pressing forward the Home Rule Bill' - Long told Churchill that he found this article 'most admirable & very helpful.'[1] On 24 June Lloyd George stepped up the campaign against the terrorists by appointing an Irish Affairs Committee (also known as the Irish Situation Committee), again with Long as chairman, to make suggestions for the suppression of crime and disorder. The committee had at its command a formidable array of talent: apart from Long it included Balfour, Churchill, Birkenhead, Hamar Greenwood, Sir James Craig and H.A.L. Fisher. Its meetings, the first of which took place on the 29th, soon became known as 'Irish Lunches' owing to the fact that members gathered at luncheon - the only available time - in the House of Commons. The committee's function was to discuss Irish questions in the light of information available in London, and with regard to the political

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[1]Gilbert, Churchill, Volume Four, pp. 453-4.

situation at Westminster, to call the attention of the cabinet to items of special interest, and to make policy suggestions to the Irish government, particularly in the area of security.[1]

Some three weeks later, on 22 July, Long recommended that the security forces 'actively assume the offensive' and that martial law be imposed immediately in order to give 'moral support' to 'the military in the carrying out of their duties.'[2] The cabinet met on the following day to discuss the recommendation. This was the first occasion on which Dominion status was raised in cabinet as a possible solution, with Lord Curzon even suggesting negotiations with Sinn Fein with a view to modifying the bill. Long rejected this proposal outright and told his colleagues that if it were not for the complexity of the financial clauses of his bill he could have the measure on the statute book in a matter of days.[3] The Law Adviser to Dublin Castle, William Wylie, argued that the legal system was collapsing and endorsed Curzon's view that it would be prudent to initiate negotiations.[4] General Tudor confirmed that the position was parlous, even informing the cabinet that the R.I.C. was 'finished as an effective

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[1]For Long's views on the committee's primary function see his letter to Sir Maurice Hankey, 26 June 1920, W.L.P., WRO 947/424.

[2]Irish Situation Committee, 4th Conclusions, 22 July 1920, P.R.O., CAB 27/107; C.P. 1672, CAB 24/109.

[3]Jones, Whitehall Diary: Ireland, 1918-25, pp. 25-31.

[4]Speech of William Wylie, Law Adviser, 23 July 1920, P.R.O., C.P. 1693, CAB 24/109.

force, but far from recommending conciliation he advised much sterner measures. Tudor requested the immediate imposition of martial law, a system of identity cards, restricted domicile, and the incarceration of all Sinn Fein prisoners on the mainland.[1] Long reiterated that he would countenance no concessions to the gunmen.

After heated discussion the cabinet conference broke up without reaching any firm conclusions. Despite the grim warnings from both the Law Adviser and the Police Adviser that Sinn Fein was winning the battle, the policy of restoration of the law coupled with home rule remained intact.[2] According to Thomas Jones, the instigation of the 'Irish Lunches' was known immediately in Sinn Fein circles and was regarded by most members of the cabinet as responsible for the sudden upsurge in crime.[3] Two days later, on 25 July, Long prepared for his colleagues a memorandum in which he stated unequivocally that he would neither water down his bill so as to conciliate Sinn Fein nor lend any support to any moves towards Dominion home rule.[4] In this he was supported by Lloyd George, who referred to himself as 'still a Gladstonian Home Ruler.'[5]

There was much debate concerning Dominion status during

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[1]Speech of General Tudor, Police Adviser, 23 July 1920, ibid.

[2]For the cabinet conference of 23 July 1920 see also Townshend, British Campaign in Ireland, pp. 101-3.

[3]Jones, Whitehall Diary: Ireland, 1918-25, p. 32.

[4]Memorandum by Long, 25 July 1920, P.R.O., C.P. 1688, CAB 24/109.

[5]Boyce, Englishmen and Irish Troubles, p. 121; Sheila Lawlor, Britain and Ireland, 1914-23 (Dublin, 1983), p. 65.

the summer and autumn of 1920, its advocates pointing out the improvement in relations which had resulted in the case of both Canada and South Africa. But Ireland was different: its geographical contiguity led Long and Lloyd George to harbour the deepest apprehension when considering a proposal which involved the surrender of complete responsibility for defence. The government knew that, once granted, Dominion home rule would soon become full sovereign independence. As Long predicated in a memorandum to the prime minister:

> The demand for Dominion Home Rule ... cannot ... be seriously regarded, for the simple reason that it is impossible to grant it unless we are prepared to go the whole length and accept the inevitable conclusion, namely, practical if not legal independence.[1]

Long resisted Dominion status until the end of his career, Lloyd George until he had no other choice. It never had a serious chance of gaining acceptance in 1920, though it did win Asquith's backing.[2]

Instead, the government decided to endorse Long's demand for even stronger measures in Ireland, and Hamar Greenwood hastily cobbled together a bill to allow capital cases to be dealt with by courts-martial. The bill was pushed through with great celerity in exactly a week: the Restoration of Order in Ireland Act became law on 9 August. Long spent September dealing with the question of financial

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[1]Memorandum by Long to Lloyd George, 29 Sept. 1920, L.G.P., F/34/1/46.

[2]See letter by Asquith, The Times, 5 Oct. 1920.

autonomy. His bill reserved to Westminster powers over income tax and postage, customs and excise, and he now let it be known that he was prepared to drop these clauses if in so doing the measure could be made more attractive to nationalist Ireland. On 10 September he proposed that full fiscal autonomy be granted, provided only that the South accept a fair share of past debt.[1] The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Austen Chamberlain, readily concurred.[2] By the end of the month Long stated that he was prepared to give to each of the Irish parliaments full control over all administration, including finance, reserving to Britain only the control of certain harbours and other defensive arrangements.[3] Draft amendments to give effect to these proposals were prepared.[4] Long recognised that to grant fiscal autonomy to the two Irish parliaments was to perpetuate the division between North and South, but he justified such a move on the ground that Irish unity had always been a chimera. Indeed, he had come to regard debate over an all Ireland parliament as purely academic; the Council of Ireland featured in his bill was merely a harmless sop to nationalist sentiment. No understanding with Sinn Fein could be expected, even hoped for, therefore the aim was to grant as much to the

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[1]Memorandum by Long, 20 Sept. 1920, P.R.O., C.I. 83, CAB 27/70.

[2]Note by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 16 Sept. 1920, P.R.O., C.I. 84, Cab 27/70.

[3]Memorandum by Long, 29 Sept. 1920, P.R.O., C.I. 87, CAB 27/70.

[4]'Draft amendments for giving effect to the proposal No. 1 in Mr. Long's Memorandum of 10 September 1920 (C.I. 83) that complete financial control be given to the two Irish parliaments ...', P.R.O., C.I. 89, CAB 27/70.

South as was consistent with British security and to protect Ulster. The bill, Long maintained, was the best that could be achieved in the circumstances. As such, it deserved to be put on the statute book as soon as possible. Southern Ireland must then decide whether to 'take it or leave it.'[1]

Speaking on behalf of Southern Unionists, Lord Midleton described Long's proposed concessions over fiscal autonomy as 'a red rag to a bull',[2] meaning that they would simply provoke the Sinn Fein extremists into holding out for even more. The cabinet met to discuss the question on 13 October. Despite Long's recommendation, Lloyd George would not hear of fiscal amendments until Sinn Fein indicated a willingness to enter into negotaitions to make the bill workable.[3] In other words, the prime minister saw no reason to give something away for nothing, and the draft amendments were dropped. Similarly, a proposal by Long, later in the month, that the South be given a nominated second chamber as a matter of 'expediency, not principle'[4] so as to guard against the possibility of Sinn Fein taking seats in Dublin and then proceeding to

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[1]For Long's views on why the bill should be passed into law by Christmas 1920 see his letter to Bonar Law, 3 Oct. 1920, B.L.P., 103/5/10.

[2]Midleton to Chamberlain, 25 Sept. 1920, A.C.P., AC 30/1/4.

[3]Cabinet conclusions, 13 Oct. 1920, P.R.O., CAB 23/23; Jones, Whitehall diary: Ireland, 1918-25, p. 41. In the Preface to her recently published Britain and Ireland, 1914-23 Dr Sheila Lawlor states, erroneously, that 'Law and Long continued to oppose fiscal autonomy ...'

[4]'Copy of a letter from Mr. Long to the Secretary' (Capt. L.F. Burgis), 30 Oct. 1920, P.R.O., C.I. 98, CAB 27/70.

make the Act unworkable, came to nothing. The bill thus completed its committee stage with no major amendments.

Long's health deteriorated markedly at the beginning of November and he was forced to take to his bed at Rood Ashton. Ulster's opposition to an Irish Council still represented a potential obstacle to the bill's progress. By 9 November Long's health was so bad that he told Bonar Law that whilst he had no desire to abandon his work he would feel obliged to resign if Lloyd George wanted to entrust the bill to a fitter man.[1]

Two days later the bill received its third reading. In the Lords Willoughby de Broke still advocated fighting to the finish to preserve the Union, an attitude which provoked a mordant rebuke from Lord Curzon. 'Nothing', Curzon mocked in a debate in the upper House on the 25th,

> will convert my noble friend Lord Willoughby de Broke. He still remains a magnificent relic of the old guard, but the backwoods in which my noble friend ranged at the head of a formidable band some years ago are now relatively deserted, and his picturesque figure is seen stalking ... amid the scenes that were once those of his adventures and triumphs.[2]

The Lords' amendments were considered by the Commons on 16 December[3] and exactly a week later the Government of

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[1] See Long to Bonar Law, 9 Nov. 1920, B.L.P., 103/5/15.
[2] 42 H.L. Deb. ser.5 col. 667 (25 Nov. 1920).
[3] 136 H.C. Deb. ser.5 cols. 759-894.

Ireland Act received the royal assent.[1] As the Nationalist leader, Joseph Devlin, had told the House on second reading: 'They have created for the first time in history two Irelands. Providence arranged the geography of Ireland and the Right Honourable Gentleman has changed it.'[2]

The Government of Ireland Act has not on the whole met with the approval of historians.[3] Indeed, in some quarters partition has been singled out as the root cause of Ireland's subsequent troubles and the Act condemned as a telling example of British ineptitude. Leo Amery pointed out that the Act, although an 'ingenious constructive alternative', failed because it solved not the Irish problem, but 'what had been the Irish problem before the war.... It could only have succeeded after the war if anything like a

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[1]The provisions of the Government of Ireland Act can be summarised as follows: It created two parliaments, one for the six Protestant counties of Ulster (Antrim, Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, Londonderry and Tyrone), one for the remaining twenty-six counties. It provided for a Council of Ireland, comprising twenty representatives of each parliament and a president nominated by the Lord Lieutenant of Southern Ireland. The Council was given only very limited powers, and it could neither receive nor assume further powers without the mutual authority of both parliaments. The Act provided for a united Ireland only if the two parliaments so agreed. Thus, Long conceded the political means for unification in the certain knowledge that those means would never be used.

[2]127 H.C. Deb. ser.5 col. 1149 (30 Mar. 1920).

[3]There are, however, some notable exceptions to this general rule. Dr D.G. Boyce, for example, has commented in Englishmen and Irish Troubles, p. 112, that 'whatever else might be said about the Government of Ireland bill at least it corresponded to the realities of the situation.'

normal political situation had first been restored by the effective suppression of revolutionary terrorism.'[1] This was precisely Long's intention: he always maintained that government from Westminster through the Lord Lieutenant and Chief Secretary should be upheld until all republicans operating beyond the law had been either imprisoned or executed. Writing to Austen Chamberlain from his retirement, Long emphasised this point:

> I think I ought to tell you that when we were passing the Home Rule Bill through Committee the idea in my mind - which I think found expression in my speeches and which, I believe, was the general idea of the Government about bringing the Act into force in Southern Ireland - was that we hoped and believed then that before the time came to put the Act in force the condition of Ireland would be materially improved, but if it remained in its then state of rebellion we should not attempt to hold elections in the country. Unfortunately the condition of Ireland is now even worse.[2]

The Act, therefore, was not a failure in itself: it failed because its provisions were attempted before conditions in Ireland were conducive to success.

Long's espousal of home rule after 1918, more than any other area of policy with which he was associated, gives the lie to the oft-repeated allegation that he was a blinkered reactionary. His attitude was essentially one

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[1] L.S. Amery, My Political Life, Volume Two: War and Peace, 1914-1929 (London, 1953), pp. 227-8.

[2] Long to Chamberlain, 25 Apr. 1921, A.C.P., AC 30/1/15. See also Chamberlain to Long, copy, 27 Apr. 1921, and Long to Chamberlain, 28 Apr. 1921, ibid., 30/1/16 and 17.

of expediency. In June 1920 he explained to a friend:

> I have come to the conclusion that after the passing of the Act of 1914 it has been impossible to avoid one of two courses: (a) to allow that Act to come into force; (b) to amend it or substitute another for it - simple repeal being in my judgement, impossible.... Therefore, I set myself to work to try and frame a practical, working scheme.[1]

It is a credit to Long's practical ability and plain commonsense that he was able to recognise the futility of maintaining his earlier stand and was able, instead, to take a prominent part in drafting the only measure which necessity demanded, however much he disliked its content. As he had told the Archbishop of Westminster in 1918: 'I feel that it cannot, must not, be beyond the power of statesmanship to avert the awful disasters with which we appear to be threatened ...'[2]

The Government of Ireland Act carried notable political advantages. The Ulster Unionists had been a nuisance in British politics for some years; but the setting up of a Northern parliament meant that Westminster could turn its back on Ulster and let others govern the unruly province. A two parliament solution took Ireland out of the realm of British politics, and it allowed Britain to withdraw from Ireland on her own terms. Sovereignty would be retained 'de jure' but 'de facto' the Irish could

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[1]Long to A.F. Blood, copy, 16 June 1920, W.L.P., WRO 947/160.

[2]Long to Cardinal Bourne, copy, 11 May 1918, ibid., WRO 947/161.

get on with governing themselves. A Northern parliament had the added bonus that no Irishman could complain of government by Westminster. In theory, all Ireland was autonomous.

Many Southern Unionists were far from satisfied with the Act and regarded Long as a traitor. One of his correspondents described the measure as 'equivalent to shutting a man in a tiger's cage and advising him to make himself as comfortable as possible.'[1] Yet it was fortunate for Southern Unionists that Long was in charge of the measure, for of all senior ministers he was by far the most sympathetic to their plight,[2] and the Act gave protection where it could. For example, neither Irish parliament was permitted to impose additional income tax or surtax, and private property could not be expropriated without adequate compensation.

If Sinn Fein had first been destroyed or if the Irish Nationalist party had still commanded majority support in the South, then the Act would have been a brilliant solution. It corresponded to all the realities of the situation except the one that the government could least afford to acknowledge: Sinn Fein was master in the South. In 1886, 1893 and 1912-14 home rule had foundered on the rock of Ulster. In 1920 it satisfied Ulster, but the nationalists had waited too long for too little.

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[1]Rev. Colthurst to Long, 18 Feb. 1920, ibid., WRO 947/185.

[2]For Southern Unionist attitudes to the Government of Ireland Act see Buckland, Irish Unionism: The Anglo-Irish and the New Ireland, pp. 223-32.

That the Act was a brave attempt to face political realities, to reconcile the demand for home rule with the determination of Ulster to resist those demands, cannot be denied. It faced squarely up to the fact that Ireland contained two irreconcilable, and fundamentally hostile, communities; and it gave to nationalist Ireland much greater powers than ever contemplated by either of Gladstone's Home Rule Bills or by Asquith's Act of 1914. To stigmatise the Government of Ireland Act, and the Treaty of 6 December 1921 which effectively amended it, as the root of subsequent Irish troubles is to ignore the fact that partition was the only option left if Britain was to withdraw from Ireland without coercing Ulster. Partition was the only way out of an otherwise insoluble problem. In recognising this neither Long nor Lloyd George were guilty of opportunism: both were simply being pragmatic. Together they solved the Irish problem to a greater extent then any other British statesman, before or since. That the solution was not perfect was in the nature of the problem.

EPILOGUE

THE RETIREMENT YEARS

With the passing of the Government of Ireland Act, Long's political career was effectively over. He was suffering from chronic arthritis of the spine. Lord Lansdowne told Curzon after a visit to Rood Ashton in December 1920 that 'he is as gallant as ever, but I think he must realise that his official career is nearing its end.' He resigned, at the insistence of his doctors, in February 1921 and felt the forced withdrawal from public life acutely. His mind still active, he spent many months flat on his back, bound up in a tight, uncomfortable strait-waistcoat, a position from which he was unable even to write letters.

Moves were afoot to secure Long's promotion to the House of Lords within days of his retirement. Some of Long's Unionist colleagues were worried that if he returned to the Commons when his health recovered he would find it very difficult to avoid giving a lead. Lloyd George, acting through Lord Edmund Talbot, therefore pressed Long to take a peerage. There was some talk of an earldom - Long had, after all, sat in the House for forty-one years and served in the cabinets of Lord Salisbury, Balfour, Asquith and Lloyd George. In April 1921 George Gibbs, Long's brother-in-law, travelled to Rood Ashton to talk

things over.[1] Long agreed to go to the Lords with great reluctance and only at the entreaty of the party leaders. He had intended to retain his seat and return to the Commons when he could. As he told George Younger:

> I cannot tell you what I feel about it all, but I can talk to you without reserve - I love the House of Commons, and I like my own name. However, the odds are against me just now ...[2]

On 13 May Long was officially informed by the prime minister that he was to be offered a viscounty.[3] He took the title Viscount Long of Wraxall.

The by-election caused by his elevation proved a serious embarrassment to the government. St. George's, Westminster, should have been one of the safest Conservative seats in the country, but feeling against the coalition had already reached such proportions that the government nominee, Sir Herbert Jessel, was defeated by an 'Anti-Waste' candidate run by Lord Rothermere and his son, Esmond Harmsworth.[4] Lloyd George had good reason to regret that

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[1]For Long's record of this conversation, dated merely 'April 1921', see L.P., Add. MS. 62426.

[2]Long to Younger, copy, 9 May 1921, ibid. For further evidence of Long's reluctance to go to the Lords see also Long to Carson, copy, 9 May 1921, ibid., and Long to Bonar Law, 8 Apr. 1921, B.L.P., 107/1/12.

[3]Lloyd George to Long, 13 May 1921, L.P., Add. MS. 62426. Long seems to have been led to believe that he would later be granted an earldom if he first accepted a viscounty. This promise, or perhaps it was just an intimation, was never honoured, although, at Lady Doreen's request, Sir William Bull later tried on Long's behalf to secure such a promotion. See Lady Doreen Long to Bull, 28 Nov. 1922, Bu.P., 5/12.

[4]See Maurice Cowling, The Impact of Labour, 1920-1924 (Cambridge, 1971), p. 56.

he so hastily pushed Long into vacating such a 'safe' seat.

When his health permitted, Long continued to flirt with federalism, lending his support in 1921 to J.A. Murray MacDonald's campaign for a Parliament Relief Bill which would set up a federal constitution for the whole of the United Kingdom. Indeed, Long drafted some of the proposed measures himself.[1] He wrote a letter of support to The Times[2] and even suggested starting a federal campaign in the country, though this idea had to be dropped for lack of interest.[3]

During the summer of 1922 Long involved himself in the campaign for greater economic co-operation within the Empire. In a letter to The Times he called for a cabinet committee to prepare the way for an Imperial Economic Conference which should 'deal finally and effectively with the whole subject',[4] and on 21 July 1922 the formation of the Empire Development Union , with Long as president and Professor Hewins as chairman, was announced in the Daily Telegraph. The Union - a pet scheme of Hewins's - devoted itself to the promotion of full partnership within the Empire on all economic matters, hoping ultimately to secure legislation to develop imperial

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[1]See Murray MacDonald to Long, 13 Apr. 1921, W.L.P., WRO 947/749. J.A. Murray MacDonald was Liberal MP for Stirling and Falkirk Burghs.

[2]See The Times, 13 May 1921.

[3]See Long to Murray MacDonald, copy, 13 May 1921, W.L.P, WRO 947/749.

[4]The Times, 7 July 1922.

resources by joint action, to organise supplies of raw materials, to safeguard important industries and to protect against dumping. Long laid down the Union's programme in a rather pedestrian article which he contributed later in the year to The Nineteenth Century and After,[1] using virtually the same arguments as Joseph Chamberlain had used twenty years earlier.

Long tried during his retirement to remain aloof from party politics, although he was often badgered for his opinions by Conservative backbenchers. He warned Austen Chamberlain repeatedly during the early months of 1922 that the party would not much longer support Lloyd George. 'There is no doubt', he told Chamberlain,

> ... that L.G., whether intentional or not, by hanging onto the leadership is gradually wearing out and destroying our Party ... and, frankly, I do not think you ought to risk your personal position ... by undue loyalty to the P.M.[2]

To Sir George Younger Long remarked that

> ... the Conservative Party have never been accustomed to be dragooned or ordered about and they won't have it. The Leaders can lead them, if they are courageous and tactful, but they cannot drive them.[3]

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[1]Long of Wraxall, 'Why we should concentrate on the Empire', The Nineteenth Century and After (October, 1922). For Long's papers relating to the Empire Development Union see W.L.P., WRO 947/882.

[2]Long to Chamberlain, copy, 27 Mar. 1922, L.P., Add. MS. 62405.

[3]Long to Younger, copy, 27 Mar. 1922, ibid., Add. MS. 62427. In February Long had advised Chamberlain to prepare for a general election and to lay down a programme of party policy in order to stave off the growing discontent. He believed

Although the critics of the coalition were legion, only the 'diehard' group led by Lord Salisbury wanted to destroy it. Most wanted only to replace Lloyd George as prime minister.[1] With this intention, Long played a small part in the crisis of October 1922. On Tuesday 10 October he took the chair at a party meeting summoned discreetly by Sir William Bull at Brown's Hotel. The 'diehards' were represented by Joynson-Hicks; Long's intention was to find some basis on which the coalition could be saved and Lloyd George ousted from power. He was asked to represent the meeting in conversations with Lord Salisbury, for as the elder statesman of the party it was hoped that Long's influence might be used to heal the breach.[2] Long met Salisbury at the Curzon Hotel on the 12th, and a statement was drawn up to be passed on immediately, through Younger, to Chamberlain.[3] It demanded Lloyd George's resignation or, it asserted ominously, the Conservative party would break up.[4] Chamberlain responded with the most egregious political insensitivity: he threatened to resign himself and declared that a Conservative

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that a bold policy statement and a clear commitment to winning an election as a separate party, although the coalition might be reconstructed afterwards, represented the only means by which Chamberlain could maintain his position. See Long to Chamberlain, copy, 19 Feb. 1922, W.L.P., WRO 947/825.

[1] Cowling, Impact of Labour, p. 194.

[2] Hewins, Apologia of an Imperialist, 2, 258-9.

[3] Long, 'Memorandum of what took place on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, the 10th, 11th and 12th October 1922', W.L.P., WRO 947/845. Hewins, op. cit., loc. cit., dates the meeting at Brown's Hotel as 15 October.

[4] Long to Younger, copy, 12 Oct. 1922, W.L.P., WRO 947/845.

government would have to take office which none of the leaders would be prepared to join.[1]

Whilst Long had clearly allied himself with those who were challenging Chamberlain's policy, he had no desire to oust Chamberlain from the leadership; but from the moment of Bonar Law's retirement he had recognised that Chamberlain would have difficulty in holding the party in check. He hoped to persuade Chamberlain to modify his position and abandon Lloyd George if necessary. On the same day that Long laid his cards on the table by writing to Younger as the spokesman of the anti-Lloyd George, pro-coalition faction he also wrote to Chamberlain advising him to think again before precipitating an open party revolt.[2]

Once it became clear that the coalition could not be saved Long was a prominent proponent of the view that 'even those who had supported the Coalition should recognise ... that it was finished.' He could see no sense in ex-Conservative Coalitionists refusing to follow Bonar Law in a last gesture of defiance.[3] Chamberlain's behaviour he regarded as blinkered and foolish.

Long did not personally attend the famous Carlton Club meeting, which sealed the fate of the coalition and deposited Lloyd George forever in the political wilderness, but he sent a telegram backing Bonar Law, having assured

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[1]Cowling, Impact of Labour, p. 196.

[2]See Long to Chamberlain, copy, 12 Oct. 1922, W.L.P., WRO 947/845.

[3]Cowling, Impact of Labour, p. 254.

J.C.C. Davidson on the 21st that his support could be counted upon.[1] As he had remarked to Younger on 4 September: 'It is in my opinion most unjust but I am afraid it is true that Austen has only a slender following in the H. of C. while in the country he really counts for nothing.'[2] Once again, Long's political judgement had proved sound, Chamberlain's unsound. This was Long's last contribution of note to Conservative party politics. He devoted the remaining two years of his life to writing his memoirs, published late in 1923, and to travel.

Long's retirement was bedevilled by poor health and financial worry. He was not one of those politicians who retire from public life personally better off than when they enter it. In 1919 part of his Wiltshire estates at South Wraxall were sold and by the end of 1920 he was heavily overdrawn, his affairs in a parlous condition. Bull recorded: 'Walter Long's affairs are in a rather serious condition & I have been compelled to take over the management of his banking account.'[3] Shortly after his resignation Lady Doreen confided to Bull that 'Walter has not discussed our finances with me, but I

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[1]See Long to Davidson, 21 Oct. 1922, B.L.P., 112/26/2; Bonar Law to Long, 24 Oct. 1922, L.P., Add. MS. 62404.

[2]Long to Younger, copy, 4 Sept. 1922, W.L.P., WRO 947/859.

[3]Bull's diary, 27 Dec. 1920, 'Retrospect for 2nd half of 1920', Bu.P., 5/2.

fear he lies and broods. I wish he would now try and make some effort to do things, I am sure he could but he seems to dread trying.'[1]

His health improved only very slowly, and even towards the end of 1921 he still needed assistance before he could move. At the end of the year he decided to travel, hoping that the warmer climes of the Mediterranean would assist recovery, and the first three months of 1922 were spent visiting North Africa, Malta, Sicily and the French Riviera. The trip abroad produced a marked improvement and on his return he was able to take his seat in the Lords, launching immediately into a campaign to secure better treatment for disbanded R.I.C. men.

Such improvement, however, was shortlived. By the summer of 1924 Long was again seriously ill. His last letters make pathetic reading. On 18 September he gave the following summary of his condition to Lord Selborne:

> I have gone back rather than forward and I am entirely dependent upon the aid of two nurses with whose aid I am able to do a little work, in the middle of the day. What is really most troublesome is that I am rendered practically speechless.... I am so short of breath that if I were to attempt to make a long deliverance I should have a dreadful fit of coughing & be quite useless for an hour or two.[2]

Just eight days later, on the evening of Friday 26 September

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[1]Lady Doreen Long to Bull, 23 Mar. 1921, ibid., 5/3.

[2]Long to Selborne, copy, 18 Sept. 1924, W.L.P., WRO 947/352.

1924, he died at Rood Ashton. The Sunday Times commented that

> ... he brought into politics much common sense, a very great competence as an administrator, ... and, above all, the inestimable asset of an absolutely upright and dependable character. Such men carry a weight in our affairs which is deserved because they are representative; and in our time there has been no more representative Englishman than Walter Long.[1]

A memorial service was held on 30 September at St. Margaret's Church, Westminster. The mourners included Lloyd George, Asquith, Baldwin, Curzon, Milner and Carson. The funeral took place on Wednesday 1 October at the tiny Church of St. John in Rood Ashton park, situated by the side of the lodge gates to the house which had been his home for fifty-seven years. A memorial service was held simultaneously in Salisbury Cathedral. The coffin, made on the estate from plain oak, was carried from the house to the small churchyard on a farm wagon drawn by two chestnut mares, with the tenantry acting as bearers. And there, in a humble coffin in an obscure country churchyard, Walter Long was laid to rest.

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[1] Sunday Times, 28 Sept. 1924.

CONCLUSION

Despite sitting in parliament for forty-one years, holding cabinet office for sixteen of them, and very nearly becoming leader of the Conservative party, Walter Long has received scant attention from historians. And most of the attention which he has received has been either misguided or plain wrong-headed, relying far too heavily on the highly critical remarks of his political enemies instead of looking in detail at the track record of the man himself.[1] Nowadays Long is something of an obscurity, relegated to a passing mention in the assorted histories of the Conservative party, occasionally awarded a paragraph when the leadership contest of 1911 is discussed. Yet in the years 1905-21 he was, with Balfour, Bonar Law, Austen Chamberlain, Lansdowne and Curzon, one of the most important men in the Conservative party.

Historical judgement has, on the whole, been harsh. Lord Blake, a distinguished historian of the Conservative party, has described Long as 'neither an intelligent nor a quick-witted man. He was hot-tempered and inclined to be impulsive. He was an indifferent and discursive debater.'[2] John Ramsden, also an historian of the modern

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[1]As Cameron Hazlehurst has rightly observed of Lloyd George, 'it is not enough to cite contemporary gossip and opinions - especially the opinions of those least likely to be objective - as evidence of a man's character.' Cameron Hazlehurst, 'The Conspiracy Myth', a lecture delivered at Nuffield College, Oxford, in January 1967 and published in Martin Gilbert, ed., Lloyd George (New Jersey, 1968).

[2]Blake, Unknown Prime Minister, p. 73.

Conservative party, has confirmed that 'Long was a choleric, short-tempered man who was a constant trial to colleagues in opposition or in power.'[1] These pejorative assessments have been echoed by Peter Rowland, an historian of the Liberals during this period:

> Walter Long ... was a hot-tempered, loud-mouthed man ... a splendid representative of the English squirarchy.... His sturdy Toryism ... commanded a considerable degree of support in the party and he could always be relied upon to stand firm against any Radical innovation.[2]

Even more censorious, and equally misleading, is a contemporary description penned by F.S. Oliver:

> He is a very dangerous creature to deal with: partly because of his limited intelligence which makes it difficult for him to understand anything outside official routine and wirepulling; but chiefly because of liability to attacks of violent personal jealousy (wh. come upon him like epileptic fits and for which therefore he should not perhaps be held morally accountable) ...[3]

The view that Long was an archetypal Tory squire was nurtured during his own lifetime. The following piece of contemporary journalism, which appeared complete with an illustration of Long on horseback jumping a hedgerow, hounds at his side, well indicates how the myth of the pure-squire Conservative developed. It was first published

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[1]Ramsden, Age of Balfour and Baldwin, p. 94.

[2]Peter Rowland, The Last Liberal Governments: The Promised Land, 1905-1910 (London, 1968), p. 51.

[3]Oliver to Chamberlain, 7 Mar. 1918, A.C.P., AC 14/6/78.

in November 1915:

> There is nothing your stout yeoman hates like having a squire over him who smells too much of learning. What he wants is not a prig or a pedant but a wholesome human being who will think more of him than he does of Plato and the dead philosophers. A hale and hearty English gentleman who plays cricket, breeds prize bulls and fat sheep, rides to hounds, and takes his duties as a Justice of the Peace seriously - that's the sort your yeoman wants and that's the sort Walter Long is.
>
> One might almost say that Walter Long's career is the triumph of physical fitness, ... and of all people in the three kingdoms Walter Long is one of the fittest. The north wind across the moors could not be keener, fitter, and when he breezes into the House he brings all outdoors with him in his ruddy countenance.
>
> ... He represents all the good old Tory virtues - loyalty, patriotism, live and let live, responsibility to dependants, the ability of the ruling classes ...[1]

This sort of description, inaccurate in almost every respect, was not put to rights by Long's own account of his political life. Indeed, the standard picture of Long is aided and abetted by his autobiography, Mèmories, which made its first appearance in 1923. The book is a compound of reminiscence, anecdotes, platitudes and diatribes. It is not an attempt to throw light on the political history of the preceding decades, nor to illuminate Long's role in shaping that history. As a

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[1]Article on Long in the series 'Politicians I have met' by H.F. Gadsby, Saturday Night (a Canadian periodical), 20 Nov. 1915. W.L.P. WRO 947/500.

reliable source, Memories is almost worthless. To list its many inaccuracies and falsifications would require a chapter in itself. Important episodes are glossed over, trivial incidents given pages. To take but one example, the Budget of 1909 and the ensuing struggle over the House of Lords is dismissed in barely a page of gross over-simplification[1] whereas the iniquities of land tax are deemed worthy of a tortuous, rambling discourse covering four pages.[2]

The picture which emerges from Memories is quite at odds with the evidence of Long's papers, which convey an impression of a hard-working, sensible politician, a man at the heart of public affairs whose views carried weight with those in authority and whose judgements were invariably the product of much reflection and a sound grasp of the facts. Historians have for many years taken Long at his word, the narrow simple-minded author of a bad political autobiography, but in so doing they have quite underrated him. He fostered the image of the country gentleman, of the old-fashioned squire from Wiltshire, of the landowner who loved horses and dogs and fresh country air and the thrill of the chase. But it was essentially a political image, much of it deliberately contrived; and his autobiography has helped to sustain the image. Of course, Long's bucolic loves were genuine enough; but this did not prevent him from playing the role for all it was worth.

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[1] Memories, pp. 187-8.
[2] Ibid., pp. 183-7.

He was, as Robert Sanders put it after Long withdrew from the leadership contest in November 1911, 'the country gentleman at his very best.'[1]

It is, in fact, not difficult to find contemporary appraisals of Long which challenge the oft-quoted criticisms of his political enemies. Professor Hewins, a close friend for many years, published a description in 1929 which gets much closer to the truth than the vignettes of many subsequent historians:

> Writers of memoirs in recent years have shown little appreciation of his work. In fact he is scarcely mentioned. In honest effort to find a way through the Irish difficulties and the part he played in war organisation ... he certainly deserves the gratitude of his country.... Public administration was in his blood, and though he was not brilliant in the academic sense of the term, he had great aptitude for management.... There are many important people who believe that if the question could have been put to the vote, Long would certainly have been elected leader of the party. He had a great following in the House of Commons.... He was not clever nor was he at all conspicuous in the more showy characteristics of the successful politician, but in administration and the patient overcoming of difficulties and in unprejudiced consideration of practical alternatives in action, Walter Long was a most efficient member of the Government.... He was certainly not appreciated as he ought to have been.[2]

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[1] Sanders diary, 15 Nov. 1911.

[2] Hewins, Apologia of an Imperialist, 1, 11-13.

F.E. Smith recognised that Long was a man of 'remarkable commonsense' and 'great administrative experience',[1] whilst George Lansbury remembered that Long tried hard to understand Labour's point of view and aspirations.[2]

Sir Ian Malcolm, who knew Long well for many years and who wrote his entry for the Dictionary of National Biography, penned the following sketch:

> Walter Long ... was a plain blunt man, very irascible at times and took no pains to disguise the fact ... his gusts of temper passed as quickly as clouds across the sun.... What he did not know about Agriculture and Local Government ... was not worth knowing, and the Government offices that deal with these intricate subjects were never better managed than during the years when he presided over them.... He was a man of immense courage and was never afraid of letting his opinions be known ... he was a real success in Ireland.
>
> ... If honesty, plain speaking and hard work were the only qualities necessary in a leader, we could not have chosen a better man.... But there are other gifts at least as necessary as these; wide vision, imagination, dexterity in debate, and a certain serenity which he could not always command ... he was a splendid party man ... and a better chief never walked the floor of a Government office.[3]

These character sketches, all written by men who knew Long personally, not only challenge the strictures of Long's

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[1]Earl of Birkenhead, Contemporary Personalities (London, 1924), p. 7.

[2]Lansbury wrote: 'Our best friends were the late Henry Chaplin, Lord Long, and Gerald Balfour; they all, at least, tried to understand us.' Quoted in Marchioness of Londonderry, Henry Chaplin, A Memoir (London, 1926), p. 190.

[3]Ian Malcolm, Vacant Thrones (London, 1931), pp. 150-2.

more prejudiced contemporaries but offer a balance and insight lacking in most subsequent historical appraisals.

Part of the secret of Long's success was that he was an extremely courteous man, even in small things. For example, he took the trouble to learn the names of all the staff at the House of Commons and the Carlton Club and always asked after their health and their families.[1] This exceptional courtesy spilled over into all official matters. Referring to a dinner at the Guildhall the previous evening, Lord Riddell recorded a private conversation with Lloyd George on 9 November 1919 which throws light on Long's parliamentary popularity:

> L.G.: ... I was lost in admiration of Walter Long. The old boy made a most excellent speech - nothing but platitudes, but he said them in the right way.... He made all the proper references.... He also said the right thing about his colleagues.
> R.: He understands Parliamentary life. When most ministers receive a deputation they wait until the deputation has assembled. Then they enter in state followed by their satellites, take the chair, and make a bow. Not so Walter Long. He is there five minutes beforehand and has a nice word of welcome for each of the members of the deputation as he arrives. The result is that he starts the proceedings having made friends with everybody.
> L.G.: Yes ... Long has the art of dealing with Parliamentary

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[1]Sir William Bull, 'A Great Englishman, Some Personal Reminiscences', Bu.P., 5/12.

> points.... All this seems simple and commonplace, but it is effective and the outcome of a genial, kindly personality.[1]

Long's courtesy, hard work, and scrupulous honesty, allied to a very considerable parliamentary knowledge and skill, formed the base on which his political career was constructed.

In his personal habits Long paid equal attention to detail. He was always impeccably dressed and he could be very fastidious about trivial matters. He kept his office table in spotless order and would tolerate no loose papers, even demanding new pens and fresh blotting paper of his staff each day. His pet hate was the sight of dead matches littering a lawn. Sir William Bull recorded that Long would sit outside in his chair at Rood Ashton and, whilst in conversation, would continually poke the lawn in order to bury any matches thrown down by his guests.[2]

One of the charges most frequently levelled at Long is that he was capricious and impulsive. Lord Selborne even joked that Long's opinions 'depended on what he had for breakfast.'[3] Long was well aware that he invited

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[1] Lord Riddell's Intimate Diary of the Peace Conference and After, 1918-1923 (London, 1933), pp. 140-1.

[2] Bull, 'A Great Englishman'.

[3] Selborne wrote this when noting down his impression of each member of the cabinet immediately after resigning from Asquith's government at the end of June 1916, in protest against Lloyd George's proposed home rule scheme. Long had several times during the crisis indicated his own intention to resign, as had Lord Lansdowne. In the event, Long and Lansdowne stayed, Selborne went. Selborne's remark may therefore be explained by a natural feeling of resentment that Long had not carried out his threat. For Selborne's brief

accusations of fickleness. As he once told Asquith, policies had to be altered quickly because the political situation could change 'from day to day, and what appears to be a satisfactory and justifiable solution one day is completely knocked out the next.'[1] In the words of William Blake: 'The man who never alters his opinion is like standing water, and breeds reptiles of the mind.'

Long believed that a good statesman should regularly change his opinions and adapt to new circumstances. It was his lifelong conviction that 'the one inalienable possession of mankind is the tendency to err.'[2] The politician was therefore obliged to review his attitudes frequently, otherwise his errors might never be rectified. To contradict one's own speeches was simply to acknowledge that one could not always be right. To Lord Derby Long explained that 'while I would have made that speech yesterday I would not make it today, and it is impossible to say what my remarks would be had I to speak next week.'[3] Long's caprice was not so much a weakness, but a deliberate and conscious attempt not to close his eyes to change or to insist on any personal political rectitude.

The influence which Long commanded with the party leaders was sustained by his immense popularity amongst Tory back-benchers. He was a man whose support came from the bottom

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character sketches of his colleagues see E.S.P., MS. Selborne 80/285-90.

[1]Long to Bonham-Carter, 16 Apr. 1916, A.P., MS. Asquith 16/142-3. Long was on this occasion referring to recruitment.

[2]Long to Derby, copy, 8 Sept. 1920, L.P., Add. MS. 62405.

[3]Long to Derby, copy, 11 Nov. 1921, ibid.

rather than from the top of the political hierarchy. Always a hard worker, he had shown signs of a practical turn of mind from his earliest days in parliament.[1] It was this ability to grasp what was possible, rather than what was desirable, which appealed to the Conservative rank and file. Jack Sandars wrote the following percipient comments in 1908 concerning Long's standing in the party:

> Mr. Long is a lobby favourite. He listens to the chatter of the young member: he shows respectful sympathy with the protest of the old. He understands the vernacular of the backbench, and he holds grave converse with the front. He combines an agreeable alacrity of expression and a sanguine temperament with an industry which is beyond all praise.[2]

Long's was also a major voice in the affairs of the Carlton Club from about 1912 through to his death in 1924.[3] It was largely as a result of Long's influence that the Club began to take a much more prominent part in party

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[1]A good early example of this pragmatic attitude to politics can be found in a letter which Long wrote in October 1891 to the Conservative chief whip, Aretas Akers-Douglas. Long suggested that it would be wise not to run a Unionist candidate in Cork following the death of Parnell, on the ground that Parnell had been a moderate force in Ireland and would turn out to be a loss to the Unionist party. Long argued that the best course would be 'to quietly support the Parnellite - our object is to maintain the Union and this seems just now the best way.' See Long to Akers-Douglas, 16 Oct. 1891, quoted in Chilston, Chief Whip, pp. 223-4.

[2]Sandars, Studies of Yesterday, p. 59.

[3]Sir Charles Petrie, The Carlton Club (London, 1955), pp. 151-3.

politics through the revival of the Political Committee, set up in March 1914 to assist the party organisation, to advise the leader, to ascertain opinion in the constituencies, to promote the candidature of prospective Unionist MPs and to stimulate undergraduate Conservative clubs at Oxford. Long's standing at the Carlton naturally promoted and maintained his influence over Tory back-benchers, and he took care to look in at the Club whenever he could on his way home from Westminster.[1]

It is impossible to over-emphasise the role of Sir William Bull in sustaining Long's career, for it was Bull who provided the link with the Conservative backbenches on which Long depended. George Gibbs, Long's brother-in-law, was another important go-between, and Sir John Lonsdale, MP for mid-Armagh from February 1900 onwards and honorary secretary and whip to the Irish Unionists, acted in a similar capacity between Long and his Irish followers. Bull served Long faithfully from 1903 onwards. He acted as parliamentary private secretary to Long in five offices. He canvassed and organised Long's backbench support and he frequently helped Long's relations with the press. His reward was a knighthood in 1906, appointment to the Privy Council in 1918, and a baronetcy in 1922. Bull was an intensely ambitious man - self-made with practically no formal education - and his loyalty and friendship to Long possibly kept him out of office.[2] This was certainly Bull's

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[1] Ibid., p. 174.

[2] Bull constantly hoped for office up until about 1920; many of his private diary entries concern his conspicuous failure to advance.

own view. In 1920 Bull confided to his diary:

> I have renounced all idea of Parliamentary advancement. I have now been 20 years in the House....
>
> Sometimes I think I should have done wiser not to have bound myself so closely to Walter Long. As a Parliamentary Private Secretary I must vote and act with the Government. I can hardly question them. I therefore get all the criticism and none of the emoluments of office. My comfort is that I am a comfort to him & at times of use by way of advice. I have kept him out of some messes but not as many as I should have liked to do.[1] (sic)

No man played a more important part in assisting the last twenty years of Long's career, nor served him with greater loyalty, than Sir William Bull.

What, then, can be said in conclusion concerning Long's work and achievements between 1905 and his retirement in 1921? Long's obituary in The Times was surely right to claim for him 'a great fund of commonsense, reasonableness, tact and sound judgement.'[2] But more than this can perhaps be argued. Although Chief Secretary for Ireland for only ten months in 1905 he worked extremely hard to restore the country to a condition of orderliness which it had not enjoyed since the days of 'Bloody Balfour' and to re-establish

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[1] Bull's diary, 'Retrospect for First Half of 1920', Bu.P., 5/1.

[2] The Times, 27 Sept. 1924.

the credibility of traditional Unionist policy in Ireland. In this he was a marked success.

After the electoral humiliation of 1906, which he had accurately predicted, he worked to restore Conservative fortunes by countering the Chamberlainite emphasis on tariff reform, insisting that the party must produce policies attractive to a mass electorate if it was again to hold office. He played a significant part in speeding Balfour's withdrawal from the party leadership, first by insisting, often in strident tones, on a more coherent and disciplined style, then by pushing Balfour towards an early resignation. In the ensuing contest with Austen Chamberlain in November 1911 he withdrew to avoid splitting the party despite every indication that he had the backing of a majority, albeit a small one, a fact which even Lord Beaverbrook, Bonar Law's main sponsor, later acknowledged.[1]

It is a mistake to regard Long as reckless and intemperate over Irish home rule in the years before 1914. The Conservative leaders' more extreme utterances over Ulster were merely the price which had to be paid for party unity. Threatened by 'diehard' resistance in the

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[1]See Beaverbrook to Long, 6 Nov. 1923, L.P., Add. MS. 62428. Many years later, in 1929, whilst compiling a volume of original cartoons and drawings of Long, Sir William Bull annotated a caricature of the two principal contenders in November 1911 with the following marginalia: 'I had in my pocket sufficient votes to have enabled Walter Long to have been elected by a considerable majority over Austen Chamberlain if it had come to a division at the Carlton Club on that eventful day - I told Walter this but he magnanimously gave way ...' This volume is now in the private possession of Dr Colin Matthew, Christ Church, Oxford.

Lords and potential division in the Commons, Bonar Law's main concern was not Ulster but to keep his party together. The British Covenant, although ferocious in tone, was in reality little more than a conventional gesture of protest. The Irish question in 1912-14 has to be understood in terms of British party politics. The Unionist leaders were manoeuvring for a general election to be fought on their own terms - Ulster rather than tariff reform - and Bonar Law's hands were tied by his dependence on Long's backbench following. Long used home rule to advance the Conservatives' political fortunes: by the time war broke out in August 1914 the party was not committed to Ulster to the point that it would realistically have supported armed insurrection. Rather, it had made Ulster's cause its own almost solely for the purpose of winning a general election which it believed, probably rightly, must come soon.

Throughout the war Bonar Law had little authority over his own backbenches and, as a compromise leader, he was frequently obliged to defer to Long's opinions. As a wartime administrator Long was of considerable help to both the Asquith and Lloyd George coalitions, having played a key role during the early months of the war in the disruption of the party truce. Without Long's allegiance Conservative support for coalition could not be guaranteed. Long's agreement to serve in December 1916 was, in fact, the pivot on which Lloyd George's

ability to form a government turned.

In the summer of 1916 Long smashed the Irish home rule scheme hastily cobbled together by Lloyd George not because he was still opposed to any grant of home rule, but because he recognised the plan as ill-timed, ill-conceived, and based on a fundamental deception of the Irish leaders. From 1917 onwards he devoted himself to solving the Irish problem. Only recently has Long's role as a wartime reformer in the cause of a wider franchise been recognised and he made a significant contribution to the Representation of the People Act of 1918.[1] If cabinet backing had been forthcoming Long would have gone much further, completely replacing Britain's unwritten constitution with the rigidity of a federal system. Partly as a means to cut the Gordian knot of the Irish problem, partly to bind closer together the far-flung reaches of the Empire, Long became the advocate of sweeping constitutional reforms. From April 1918 until his retirement Long's was probably the most important voice in British governing circles on Irish affairs. He represented the Irish government in cabinet, sanctioned and guided the war against Sinn Fein extremists, and was responsible for the Act which ultimately partitioned Ireland.

Long was, in the words of Stanley Baldwin, '... a man who by industry, by tradition and by temperament, was a true

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[1]See Pugh, Electoral Reform in War and Peace.

House of Commons man for the greater part of his life ...'[1] Far from being a dull-witted Tory squire, he was inventive, sometimes progressive, always pragmatic; and his standing amongst Conservative backbenchers made him in many instances, and over a period of many years, party leader in fact if not in name. Long's record belies his reputation.

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[1] 177 H.C. Deb. ser.5 col. 41 (30 Sept. 1924).

APPENDIX A

A NOTE ON 'LONG OF WRAXALL: THE POLITICAL CAREER OF WALTER LONG, 1854-1924' BY RODERICK CLIFFORD (Johns Hopkins Ph.D., 1970)

Roderick Clifford, an American scholar, is the first person since Sir Charles Petrie to have devoted any considerable attention to a study of Walter Long's political career. His verdict accords entirely with the convention of representing Long as slow-witted, obdurate, and reactionary, an anachronism in an age of rapid political change and improvisation. Long was, in Dr Clifford's considered judgement, 'eminently lacking in the necessary qualities of leadership and brilliance.... Walter Long's defects of judgement and competence have been ... confirmed by the assessments of his colleagues and political contemporaries' (p. 271).

But the assessments by the colleagues and political contemporaries whom Dr Clifford adduces in evidence were, for the most part, the statements of political enemies, and therefore inherently prejudiced. If Long was so 'eminently lacking' in all qualities of leadership it is inconceivable that he could gave commanded such support on the backbenches. 'The opinions of obscure backbench MPs have, of course, usually not survived, and the historian is presented with what purports to be a significant quantity of evidence with which to denigrate Long's character and competence. Only when the highly tendentious nature of most of this derogatory evidence is realised can one begin to arrive at a more accurate, less partial assessment. Almost everybody within the Conservative party - friend and foe alike - conceded that Long would

have taken the leadership in 1911 if the issue had been put to a ballot. No man can inspire this level of political support if, as Dr Clifford suggests, he lacks all qualities of leadership.

Clifford describes Long's months as Chief Secretary for Ireland in 1905 as characterised by 'a needless feud with his Lord Lieutenant' (p. 272) and seems totally to disregard the fact that the dispute was about two very important issues - policy and the precedence of the Chief Secretary.

Clifford also makes great play with Long's 'grumbling and complaints'. It is true that Long was by temperament inclined to grumble: he did not suffer fools gladly and was not one to keep his opinions to himself. But this particular idiosyncrasy is hardly a reflection of Long's political competence. It explains why he made enemies and why so many harsh judgements were passed by contemporaries, but that is all.

Long is also charged with being a 'supreme egoist' who 'entirely misread the Irish situation' (p. 273). On many occasions, most notably in November 1911 and again in May 1915, he subordinated his own ambition to the demands of party unity, a trait not generally associated with supreme egoism. As for Ireland, pragmatism was the hallmark of Long's Irish policy. Before 1914, when he believed that the Conservatives could first demand and then win a general election, he opposed home rule steadfastly. As soon as that policy had been overtaken by events he began to search for another way out, conceding that home rule would have to be granted and looking increasingly towards federalism and partition to provide the answer.

He opposed home rule in 1916 because the plan was a bad one and the timing inauspicious. Those historians who, like Dr Clifford, argue that Lloyd George could have solved the Irish problem in 1916 if Unionists like Long

and Lansdowne had been more far-sighted ignore the fact that the scheme had the backing of Nationalists and Ulstermen only in so far as Lloyd George had succeeded in misleading them, hardly a basis for any lasting settlement. From 1918 onwards Long devoted the remainder of his political career to finding a solution. Partition may not have been an ideal solution, but it was the only one in the circumstances. The Government of Ireland Act and the Anglo-Irish Treaty which followed it brought Ireland the only kind of home rule which was possible without coercion of Ulster. Dr Clifford's treatment of these events is extremely sketchy.

When it comes to an examination of the political crisis of December 1916 Dr Clifford quotes from Long's extremely important correspondence of December 1923 with Austen Chamberlain but fails fully to grasp its significance, or to relate it to Beaverbrook's published account, or to tie it up with other evidence which indicates that Long agreed to join Lloyd George before Curzon, Cecil or Chamberlain, thereby guaranteeing support in the Commons for the new administration. Dr Clifford quite fails to grasp Long's pivotal role in the events which led Lloyd George to the premiership.

Finally, Clifford is unable to resist the charge that Long was 'a reactionary', unable 'to change his political outlook or adapt to the changing demands of Conservatism in the early twentieth century' (p. 273). Many instances could be cited to show that Long often changed his outlook to suit changing circumstances. Indeed, other writers have described Long as impulsive and capricious. Suffice it to say that he was an advocate of social reform, land reform, and reform of the House of Lords; he played a major role in the making of the 1918 Representation of the People Act; he supported a radical overhaul of the imperial constitution; and, of course, he played a key

role in the partition of Ireland. The term 'reactionary', like all terms of political abuse, is misleading and carries different meanings for different people, but in no sense can it be applied to Walter Long. It would be more appropriate to call him a progressive Conservative - a discriminating Tory who kept a sharp eye on the social movements of his day in order to preserve the best of the past.

Dr Clifford realises that there is a problem in explaining how a man of such indifferent talents could rise to the top of the Conservative party, but instead of attempting to face the problem, and so give his own conclusions at least a veneer of credibility, he dismisses it with the convenient observation that 'a precise answer cannot always be offered to explain political success' (p. 274).

Apart from the fact that Clifford's work is littered with such platitudes as 'during an active parliamentary career Long naturally became involved in the day-to-day issues and political struggles of his party' (p. 4) and 'his recurrent bouts of ill health must have contributed to the irritation and frustration he experienced' (p. 134), it offers only the most commonplace of political narratives, fails to consider objectively Long's role and achievements, neglects to emphasise the command over the Tory backbenches by which Long sustained his influence amongst the party leaders, glosses over some of the most important aspects of Long's career, and contributes only marginally to the picture presented some thity-four years earlier by Sir Charles Petrie in Walter Long and His Times.

APPENDIX B

THE LONG PAPERS

The papers of Walter Long comprise an archival source which is much underused by political historians of the period 1905-24. In Walter Long and His Times Sir Charles Petrie noted in the Preface that Long destroyed a great many personal papers before his death in 1924. Although his junior by over forty years, Petrie was a personal friend of Long's - it was at Long's behest that Petrie became at the age of only twenty-five the youngest member of the Carlton Club - and was therefore in a position to have private information regarding Long's papers. Of the extant papers there is practically nothing relating to Long's political career before 1905 and it must be assumed that these early papers have been destroyed. Apart from an obvious gap occurring in the papers for December 1916 the material would appear to be more or less complete for the years 1905-24, though it is impossible to be sure. Exactly why Long should have destroyed papers from the early half of his political career yet retained those from the later half must remain a mystery.

The papers are divided into two collections, a larger one at the Wiltshire County Record Office and a smaller one only recently acquired by the British Library. There is also an additional volume of Long's papers, of miscellaneous contents, in the Public Record Office at Kew (ref: ADM 116/3623). The papers at Wiltshire County Record Office have been described by Cameron Hazlehurst and Christine Woodland in A Guide to the Papers of British Cabinet Ministers, 1900-1951 (London, 1974). The papers described by Hazlehurst and Woodland as having been discovered in June 1973, in a tin trunk and five dispatch boxes, by

Long's grandson, the present Viscount Long of Wraxall, have now been added to, and incorporated in, the main collection. The papers include material on all aspects of Long's career from 1905 onwards and a detailed catalogue, running to over two hundred pages, is available.

The important new collection now in the British Library was purchased at Sotheby's on 20 July 1981 (lot 141). It comprises forty-one volumes, and when used by me early in 1982 this collection had not been catalogued but was identified as Deposit 7466. Since then it has been added to the British Library's collection of Additional Manuscripts and a catalogue placed in the 'Rough Register of Accessions' (Add. MSS. 62403-62443). Again, most of the material covers the period after 1905, although there is a file of general correspondence covering the years 1873-1904 (Add. MS. 62408). The section containing miscellaneous, mostly printed, material, including press cuttings and photographs, is Add. MSS. 62430-62442. The first two volumes in this series are bound albums, the contents not in chronological order but of the period 1853-1915. Add. MS. 62432 contains material, 1879-1904; thereafter the order continues chronologically to Add. MS. 62441, which contains 1924 material. Add. MS. 62442 is undated matter.

The most interesting section of the papers, however, contains Long's correspondence. General correspondence from 1905 onwards is covered by Add. MSS. 62409-62429. The heart of the collection is to be found in Add. MSS. 62403-62407, containing files of correspondence from each of the following: A.J. Balfour, Lord Lansdowne, H.H. Asquith, Andrew Bonar Law, Austen Chamberlain, Lord Derby, Lord Stamfordham, Henry Chaplin, Professor A.V. Dicey and Lord Charles Beresford.

The division of the papers into two collections appears to have been carried out according neither to subject matter nor to correspondent, and it is difficult to perceive

any rational basis for the separation. Taken together, the two collections clearly form one coherent archive. Both collections cover the same period, both contain letters from the same correspondents and both deal with the same subjects. The only obvious difference is that the bulk of personal political correspondence from front-rank Conservatives is to be found in the British Library and the bulk of official correspondence is to be found at the Wiltshire Record Office. There is, nonetheless, a considerable overlap between the two collections and one can only comment that if the division was carried out on this basis then it was carried out very poorly.

Long's grandson, the 3rd Viscount Long of Wraxall, has assured me that, to the best of his knowledge, the family possesses no further papers.

APPENDIX C

THE REVOLUTIONIST: or LINES TO A STATESMAN

by

G.K. CHESTERTON

"I was never standing by while a revolution was going on."
- Speech by the Rt. Hon. Walter Long.

When Death was on thy drums, Democracy,
And with one rush of slaves the world was free,
In that high dawn that Kings shall not forget,
A void there was and Walter was not yet.
Through sacked Versailles, at Valmy in the fray,
They did without him in some kind of way;
Red Christendom all Walterless they cross,
And in their fury hardly feel their loss ...
Fades the Republic; faint as Roland's horn,
Her trumpets taunt us with a sacred scorn ...
Then silence fell: and Mr. Long was born.

From his first hours in his expensive cot
He never saw the tiniest viscount shot.
In deference to his wealthy parents' whim
The mildest massacres were kept from him.
The wars that dyed Pall Mall and Brompton red
Passed harmless o'er that one unconscious head:
For all that little Long could understand
The rich might still be rulers of the land,

Vain are the pious arts of parenthood,
Foiled Revolution bubbled in his blood;
Until one day (the babe unborn shall rue it)
The Constitution bored him and he slew it.

If I were wise and good and rich and strong -
Fond, impious thought, if I were Walter Long -
If I could water sell like molten gold,
And make grown people do as they were told,
If over private fields and wastes as wide
As a Greek city for which heroes died,
I owned the houses and the men inside -
If all this hung on one thin thread of habit
I would not revolutionize a rabbit.

I would sit tight with all my gifts and glories,
And even preach to unconverted Tories,
That the fixed system that our land inherits,
Viewed from a certain standpoint, has its merits.
I'd guard the laws like any Radical,
And keep each precedent, however small,
However subtle, misty, dusty, dreamy,
Lest man by chance should look at me and see me;
Lest men should ask what madman made me lord
Of English ploughshares and the English sword;
Lest men should mark how sleepy is the nod
That drills the dreadful images of God!

Walter, be wise! avoid the wild and new!
The Constitution is the game for you.
Walter, beware! scorn not the gathering throng,
It suffers, yet it may not suffer wrong,
It suffers, yet it cannot suffer Long.
And if you goad it these grey rules to break,
For a few pence, see that you do not wake

Death and the splendour of the scarlet cap,
Boston and Valmy, Yorktown and Jemmappes,
Freedom in arms, the riding and the routing,
The thunder of the captains and the shouting,
All that lost riot that you did not share -
And when that riot comes - you will be there.

From The Collected Works of G.K. Chesterton (London, 1927), pp. 154-6.

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